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THE LIFE OF HENRY IRVING

"With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in."

—Abraham Lincoln.

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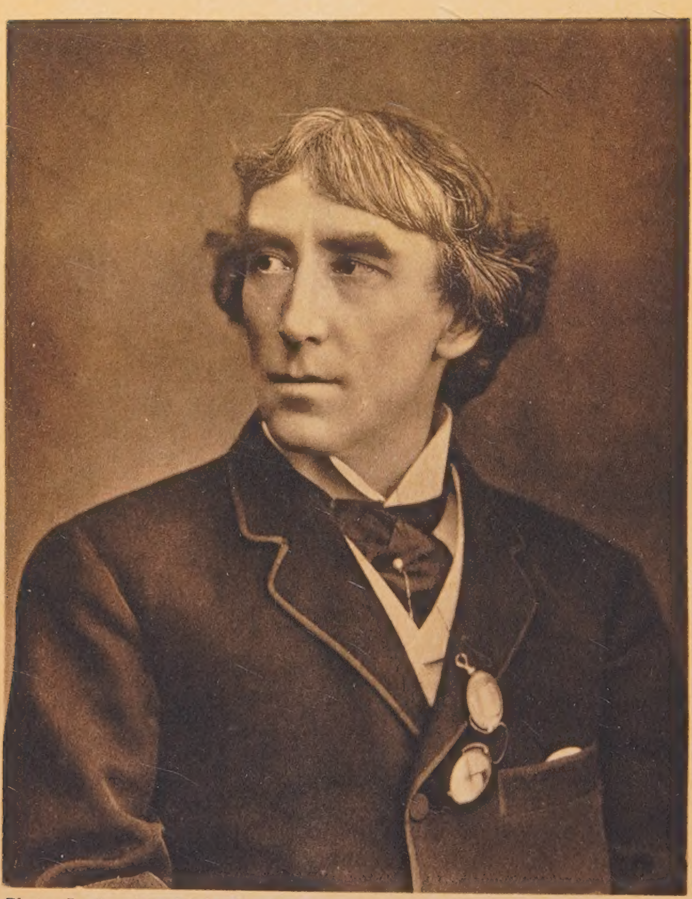

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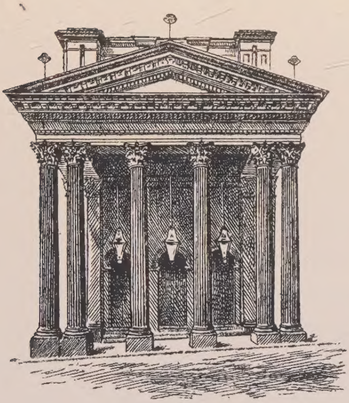
HENRY IRVING IN 1878.

THE LIFE OF
HENRY IRVING

BY

AUSTIN BRERETON



VOL. I.

WITH TWELVE COLLOTYPE PLATES
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PREFACE.

As this book tells the story of the life of Henry Irving, it follows that, in regard to the author, it is almost entirely impersonal. So that a few words of explanation and acknowledgment may be permitted by way of preface to the actual narrative. In writing this book, I have assumed the position of a third person. That is to say, I have endeavoured to view the subject from an independent point of view. In other words, I have tried to relate the career of the man and the actor as it really was. I have invariably held myself aloof and have allowed the story to tell itself. This attitude could not have been adopted had I not possessed certain qualifications for the work. The first of these qualifications, I take it, is my sympathy for the man and my admiration for the artist. It is no mere figure of speech to say that this book is the result of a labour of love. It is that, at least. Irving was my constant friend for twenty-five years. His friendship never wavered in all those years, and it deepened with time. If I have nothing else to be thankful for, I should ever hold it, as a proud and blessed memory, that, in the closing years of his life, so good and so great a man, and one a score of years or so my elder, could wear me in his heart.

But something more than sympathy and admiration are required for a biographer. This book is not a panegyric. Irving would have hated any such thing, and I possess, if

I may be allowed to say so, too much knowledge of my subject to permit me to indulge in any mere effort of eulogy. I am old enough to remember Irving in the heyday of his success, and as a writer, either as critic or journalist, it was my privilege to see him many times and in many places. Soon after taking up my abode in London, on the completion of my nineteenth year, be it said, I became intimately associated with Clement Scott, first of all as his private secretary and then as assistant-editor of his magazine, the *Theatre*. In this way, and as I was also the dramatic critic of the *Stage*, then beginning its useful career, my knowledge of the theatrical world became extensive and valuable. I was one of the first people to be informed of Irving's decision to visit America, and I forthwith proposed to write a biography of the actor dealing with his career up to that year—1883. He gave his hearty encouragement to the youth of twenty-one, with the result that "Henry Irving: A Biographical Sketch" contained much information then new to the public. Twenty years later, it fell out that I wrote the history of the Lyceum from its origin down to the end of Henry Irving's management of the house. Again in 1903, as in 1883, he took a keen interest in the work, and he annotated many of its pages. While the book was in progress, he suggested that all biographical matter, excepting that dealing strictly with the Lyceum, should be cut out, as being unnecessary to the book and detrimental to the interests of a biography which he knew I intended to write at the termination of his career, a proposal in which I acquiesced with alacrity. Thus, in 1883 and in 1903, did I receive much information from the fountain-head. But more was to follow. From the summer of 1898, I acted for Henry Irving in an official and confidential capacity. He found it necessary, for divers specific reasons, to have his interests guarded, in certain directions, in the newspaper world, and I was his trusted representative in these matters. From this time until his death, he told me much of his life's story, and sent me many letters containing valuable notes and suggestions in regard to his career.

In these circumstances, I was not greatly perturbed when the tragic death of the actor caused a flood of biographical material to pour forth from the press. In regard to the various books which have lived through the intervening years, that by Bram Stoker has won a well-merited popularity. It is full of entertaining gossip and reminiscence. On the other hand, it does not pretend to be a biography. Mr. Stoker, indeed, expressly says that his book is not to be regarded in that light, and in no instance have I had recourse to its pages for a fact, a date, or an incident. Curiously enough, however, Mr. Stoker has, unconsciously, been of considerable assistance to me. He took a deep interest in an Irving memorial which was formed, during several years, by his friend, Mr. E. W. Hennell. To this memorial—which consists of old play-bills, autograph letters, portraits, programmes, and printed matter of all sorts—Mr. Stoker was a generous contributor. In due course, this large collection, containing some two or three thousand inlaid sheets, passed into the possession of my friend, Mr. Merton Russell Cotes, who made me a welcome guest at East Cliff Hall, Bournemouth, and through whose kindness I gathered many useful and interesting items. I have also to thank Mr. Cotes for his permission to copy the picture of Irving as Charles the First, which helps to adorn these pages.

And this reminds me that my indebtedness in other quarters is so large that I am doubtful of ever repaying it. I must, however, express my most cordial thanks to the members of Sir Henry Irving's family for their willing help. I am deeply obliged to Lady Irving for having given me the particulars of her marriage: I thought it best to obtain the necessary facts from so reliable a source. Lady Irving responded with readiness to my request, and her courteous response makes me her debtor. Her sons, also, gave me considerable, I may say, invaluable help in writing the Life of their father. Mr. Laurence Irving handed me a treasure of fact and a compendium of information which has enabled me to speak with certainty on many important points. This is nothing less than Henry Irving's ledger of the financial side of the entire period of his management—August, 1878, to June, 1905—which was kept with absolute accuracy by his own officials and duly examined and certified as correct by chartered accountants. This huge volume gives, in detail, week by week, season by season, the receipts and expenses for all those years. As well as dates and figures, it sets forth the names of the plays acted, the number of their performances, and, generally, it has served the purpose of an excellent guide. I have introduced some of the figures, where I have thought that, by so doing, a useful purpose would be served, but I have not drawn too largely on statistics, as I did not want to detract from the main purpose of the biography—the narrative of a strange, eventful career, begun amid depressing scenes, rising to glory, and terminating, after disaster, in triumph.

Another book, equally invaluable for the purpose of biography, was also intrusted to me by Laurence Irving—his father's scrap-book, which begins in the year 1858 and ends in 1874. This is a human document of a most fascinating kind, and it has enabled me to tell, for the first time, the full story of Irving's life in Edinburgh and Manchester. It contains, among other items, his first speech and the accounts of his first appearance as Hamlet. By a remarkable coincidence, Henry Irving's father also kept a book in which, from 1866 until 1874, he recorded every incident of note in connection with his son for those years. The loving, patient care with which he did this is in curious contrast to Henry Irving's own book, which is not quite so orderly. Samuel Brodribb's record of his son's early career in London is the property of Mr. H. B. Irving, who handed it to me for the purpose of this book, and to whom I also owe my thanks.

Again, in Henry Irving's safe in his office in Bedford

Street there was a large collection of printed matter. This, also, was placed in my possession, and it has been of much use, forming as it does, a kind of corollary to the Hennell collection. It may well be imagined that one of my chief difficulties has been that of selection. Still, I trust that it will be found that my book is not burdened by extraneous matter. I have tried to tell a plain, unvarnished tale, in simple fashion, and to let the central figure speak for himself and for the art that he loved so well—and, as he did that so often, it will be found that there is much reminiscence in this book. I have, however, confined these recollections to their proper place as part of the story, and have not put in anything written or said by Irving, for the mere reason that it was written or said by him. I have pursued the same plan in regard to his letters, some two hundred of which have passed through my hands. They are, however, either letters of courtesy or letters which could not be used in the book with propriety. I have, therefore, selected only those letters which assist in the telling of the story. That story relates the history of Henry Irving from his birth to his death. I cannot, of course, claim that everything in the book is new, but I do claim that the book itself is new and that it presents the career of a great man and a great artist in a just light, that, in short, it is a fair picture of Henry Irving and of his great work. The history of that work in America alone is, to my mind, supremely interesting and is now related fully for the first time. The chapter headings and the index will enable those who run to read, but I hope that the pages of the book will have an abiding interest for the living admirers of Henry Irving, and that from it the future student of the English drama will be able to form, in his mind's eye, a faithful portrait of the head of the stage in the Victorian era.

For myself, I have many kind memories in connection with this book. I count myself happy in having made the acquaintance through it of the friend of Irving's boyhood, Edward Plumbridge, and of the friend of his youth, Charles Dyall. Through it, I have had many delightful conversations with the friend of Irving's Edinburgh days and his friend and stage-manager for nearly twenty-eight years—Harry J. Loveday, whose affectionate remembrance has touched me deeply. To the widows and children of two other loyal officers of "the chief," Louis Frederick Austin and Charles E. Howson, I must also express my thanks for having lent me many documents of interest. Another friend, Alfred Darbyshire, who helped me in regard to details concerning Irving's career in Manchester, unfortunately passed away a few weeks ago. Mr. William Crooke, of Edinburgh, has, I consider, placed me under a lasting obligation by giving me permission to use the beautiful portrait, hitherto unpublished, which forms the frontispiece to the second volume. It is an exquisite picture in itself, but all the more interesting because the expression is so absolutely lifelike. I cannot thank, by name, all the other people who have aided me in my efforts, but, in one way or another, I am particularly indebted to Mr. Harry Chevalier, Mr. Arthur Collins, Mr. Burnham W. Horner, Mr. W. J. Lawrence, Mr. J. H. Leigh, Sir Edward Letchworth, Sir A. C. Mackenzie, Mr. Austin Oates, and Mr. A. W. Pinero; to one and all I tender my grateful thanks. Finally, my sincere thanks are due to my friend, Mr. Nicol Dunn, who read the first proofs and frequently encouraged me in my work by his sympathetic verdict. At the same time, as Mr. Dunn only read the "rough" proofs, I must take upon my own shoulders any technical errors, which I have striven hard to avoid, but which may, despite my pains, have crept in. Should there be any such, I shall take it as a favour if I am informed of them.

In conclusion, I am fain to quote some words spoken by Henry Irving, in Edinburgh, in 1883:—

"What acknowledgment can I make to you of the Pen and Pencil to-night? The best would, of course, be to say

'I am proud of being a Scotchman!' But, alas! no possible miracle of genealogy can make me anything but a degenerate Southron. However, there is one consolation. I am told that some one has done me the honour of writing my life. He had much better, I think, have waited until I was dead, and then anything unpleasant which he might have to say would not have mattered so much; but when I tell you that, although neither the author nor the subject of this biography is Scotch, yet that the printers are Scotchmen, you will readily see that this is a work which must be read."

History repeats itself, and a remark, uttered in a merry moment, comes strangely into fulfilment. A quarter of a century has passed, and I have again, for the last time, as in 1883 it was for the first, written the biography of Henry Irving; and again, I may say, the same observation applies to the printers. My great friend is dead, but his memory lives. I trust that my tribute to that memory will be considered worthy of the trust which has been reposed in me.

AUSTIN BRERETON.

September, 1908.

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CHAPTER I.

1838-1856.

The birthplace of the actor—His parentage—His early recollections—His remembrance of Bristol—His mother—His life in Cornwall—His reminiscences of his boyhood—His school-life in London—Those times described by the friend of his boyhood—Serves in various offices in the city—His kind remembrances of those days—Joins the City Elocution Class—Described by his companion in the class—His own recollections of a performance at the Soho Theatre—Visits Sadler's Wells and the Adelphi—Studies under William Hoskins—Encouragement from Samuel Phelps—Exit, Brodribb.

THE year one thousand eight hundred and thirty eight was a momentous one in English history. The coronation of the Queen in Westminster Abbey ushered in an era which will be for ever memorable for its wonderful inventions. In the same year that Victoria came to the throne the first iron steamer from Liverpool, and the earliest one with water-tight compartments, crossed the Atlantic, the voyage occupying nineteen days, four times as much as that taken by the turbine vessels of to-day. The first mails were sent by railway instead of coach, the electric telegraph came into operation, Whetstone's stereoscope was made, and Nasmyth invented the steam hammer. The world of art and letters was marked by the opening of the National Gallery and by the publication of works by Carlyle, Macaulay, Browning, Dr. Pusey, Cardinal Newman, Samuel Lover, and Charles Dickens. And, on the 6th of February, a child was born who subsequently became the predominating influence of the English stage. No lucky star ushered in his birth. For the air was full of wars and rebellions, and there was nothing of promise in the circumstances of his coming. He was the only child of humble folk whose chief assets were sound health and righteousness of heart.

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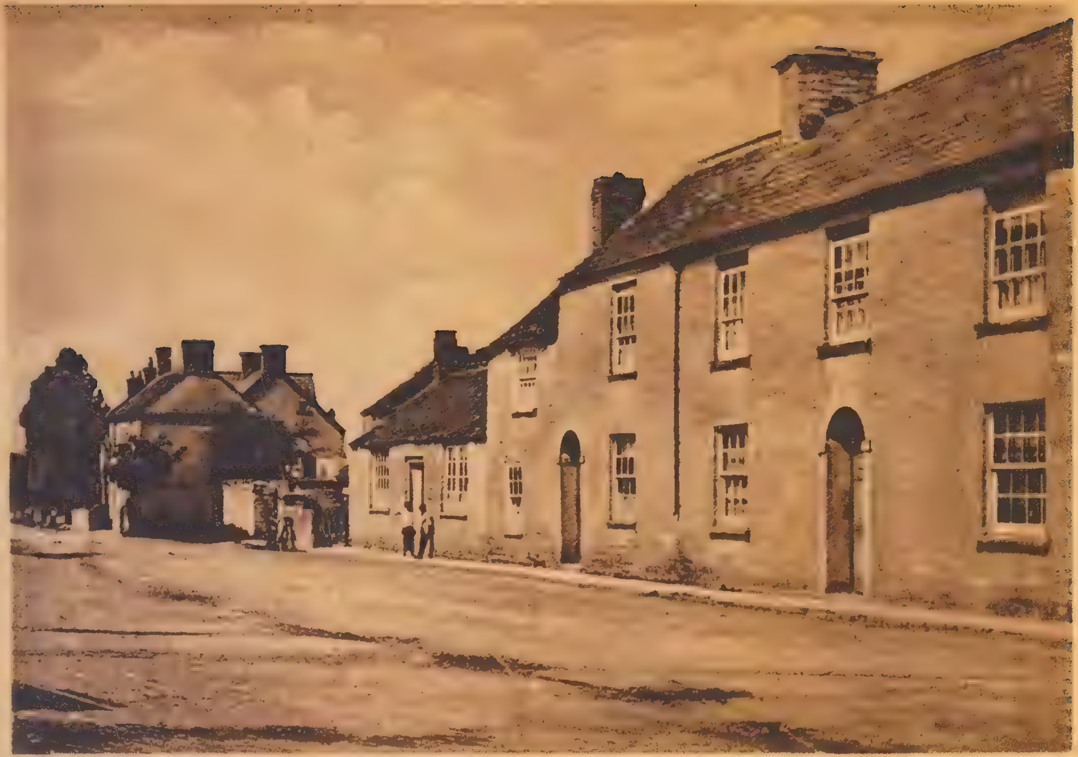
Keinton Mandeville, where he was born, was a dreary place seventy years ago, difficult of access, shut off from the busy world. It is seven miles from the famous Abbey of Glastonbury, and, with its grey stone buildings—the surrounding district is noted for its quarries—is by no means inspiriting. An anonymous writer, some years back, made a special pilgrimage to the place and described the view north of the village as "dreamily poetical. Level after level of pasture, ridge after ridge of foliage, stretch away to the foot of the hills. Behind them wrapped in haze, are the Mendips, doubtful, undefined, containing infinite possibilities. It is English with a slight Dutch flavour, a little sad, a little vague, but soft, tender, mystic. Keinton Mandeville is like a monk's cell—clean, stony, unembellished. Everything is stone—the houses, the garden hedges made of great grey slabs, even the drying posts." The place has a general air of solitude. Here, in an unpretentious stone cottage, the hero of this story was born. His parents occupied two of the half-dozen small rooms—a sitting-room on the left, as the cottage is entered, and a bedroom above.

His father was Samuel Brodribb, a tall, somewhat portly man, and an excellent rider as were all the male members of his family, for they were of yeoman stock and were accustomed to riding in to the markets at Bath and Bristol from the village of Clutton, their ancestral home. The old church has many memorials of the Brodribb family, for Henry Irving's grandfather and various other ancestors were buried in Clutton. Samuel Brodribb was the youngest of four brothers, and a man who had not the good fortune to be successful in a commercial sense. He opened a small shop in Keinton Mandeville—on the other side of the way to the cottage in which the future actor was born, and before that event. But prosperity did not come to him. In fact, when their one child was little more than four years of age, the parents found it necessary to remove to Bristol. When Henry Irving had become famous, he could only recall the place of his birth as "a God-forsaken little village. My memory of it is an infantile



The Birthplace of Henry Irving.

one. I left it when I was about four, I suppose, and I could not have been more than three when the incident occurred which is implanted in my mind as the chief thing I remember about Keinton. I used to toddle into a neighbour's farm. One day I was attacked by some sheep, more particularly a ram. I was a good deal knocked about by the brute with horns. The occurrence is in my mind even now as a dreadful memory." This recollection was in 1888, when he related the circumstance to his friend, Joseph Hatton. The visit to which he alluded took place in the early seventies, in the company of his manager, Colonel Bateman. He thought he would recollect the place, but it was quite strange to him. "It was altogether a different place from what I had thought, not at all like the picture that I had in my mind. I could not even remember the name of the farmer in whose meadow I had come to grief with the sheep. I fancied, however, that I should remember it if I saw it, so I went into the churchyard, and, after a little while I came across it—Hoddy. I looked about for the house where I had lived, but could not recall it. At last I came to a house that I felt that I knew. I went in and questioned the people. They said no one had lived in it by the name of Brodribb. After mentioning several dead and gone people who had resided in it, they at last came to Hoddy. It was the house of the farmer to whom the sheep had belonged!"

Within a year of his death, he addressed a gathering of Somersetshire men in Liverpool, and gave a final reminiscence of his birthplace: "I remember the old quarries at Keinton Mandeville, where I was born; and my childish mind was haunted in those days by the guinea fowls which perched on ghostly trees and made uncanny sounds. What part they have played in my career, I do not know, unless they gave me a dramatic yearning for the society of Shakespeare's raven, which doth bellow for revenge. I must confess that I have only once re-visited Keinton Mandeville; and then I was shown a stone edifice, supposed to be my old home. The place was quite unfamiliar to me. But in my childhood I must have known something of Glastonbury, only six miles away. I will not tell you that on the Quantock Hills my father fed his flock, though he was a Somerset man before me. Nor will I pretend that I mused deeply on Alfred who made his stronghold among the Somerset Saxons. But I think it is possible that a child on the height of Avalon may have taken into his blood sub-consciously the old legends of Arthur."

Bristol is the next scene in the story. A speech, made by the actor in that city in 1904, gives an interesting picture of these childish days: "Although I cannot claim to have been born in Bristol, here were spent some of my youngest days. Some vast amount of years ago, the SS. *Great Britain*[1] was launched; and I remember, on the occasion, being greatly impressed by the moustache worn by Prince Albert, the Prince Consort. Being desirous of emulating a fashion, then almost singular, I expressed a desire—being five years of age—to cultivate a moustache myself. This ambition (certainly a harmless one) coming to the knowledge of a particular friend of mine— a local chemist in St. James's Barton—he said he would prepare and grow one for me if I would abide in patience. Days passed, which I endured restlessly, when, tired to death, I suppose, of my importunities, my friend at last put me upon a stool and magically effected the much-desired growth. My happiness was, of course, supreme; and proceeding to my home, a few houses off, I was most indignant to find vulgar and ill-mannered persons turning round and laughing at my dignified appearance, and, bitterly complaining to my mother of their conduct, she laughed more heartily than anybody, and, soothing and appeasing me, she, with the aid of a little soap and water, gently removed the adornment, which entirely consisted of burnt cork. But I think my first spark of ambition was really struck on that glorious morning when I saw Van Amburgh, the famous lion-tamer, drive, I think it was twenty-four horses, down Park Street, and afterwards give his thrilling performance in the lions' den. I don't say that I yearned from that moment to drive a herd of horses or to domesticate lions; but they seem to me emblematic of the pictorial side of the drama—its pomp and circumstance. And in later years I found that it needed a cool head—almost as cool as Van Amburgh's—to manage a theatre, where there are steep places—almost as steep as Park Street—but in another way. Besides, in a theatre, the actor is always in a den of lions (I hope this will not be quoted as an expression of opinion against theatrical entertainments), and if he arrives at my time of life without being eaten, he may think himself lucky."

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[1] The first iron screw steamer, 1845. Length, 300 feet, tonnage, 2084, as against the 790 feet and the 31,940 tons of the *Mauretania*.

Samuel Brodribb's wife was a Cornish woman, Mary Behenna, one of six sisters. When troublous times came to her husband, she naturally bethought herself of her native county and its invigorating air, and she accordingly determined—hard though it was for her to part from her only son—that the boy should not accompany her to London, whither she was going. Accordingly, before journeying to the metropolis, she took her child to Cornwall, and left him in charge of her sister, Sarah, whose husband was Captain Isaac Penberthy, a Cornish miner of note in his day. The grief of his first separation from his mother was never effaced from the memory of Henry Irving. "At first I was miserable enough; I parted from my mother as though my heart was breaking, but did not show half I felt, nor she either," he said in after years, and his fond remembrance was always shown whenever he mentioned her. She was "lovable, devoted, a woman of fine feeling, whose affections were self-sacrificing".

Fortunately for John Henry Brodribb, Mr. and Mrs. Penberthy were splendid types of upright, deeply religious people. Isaac Penberthy was a man of great physical strength, a giant in stature, and possessed of an iron will. He was held in such deep respect in Cornwall that his funeral, in 1848, was attended by two thousand miners, many of whom came from great distances for the ceremony. Mr. and Mrs. Penberthy had three children, two boys and a girl, and in this household the boy lived for six years. His sojourn in Cornwall had a great spiritual, as well as constitutional, effect. Halsetown, the residence of his uncle and aunt, was one of the wildest and most romantic spots in Cornwall. Religion was deeply rooted among the people, and superstition, if not altogether popular, was rife. Two years before his death, the great actor gave his impressions of his boyhood in Cornwall: "To this day, they are vivid and convincing. At this distance of time—it may be, because of it—faces, incidents, and happenings stand out very clearly. But I have lost the half-tones, the subtle lights and shades of my early life. Perhaps they might modify my present mental attitude. I do not know. I have the belief that the things that last in the recollection are the lasting things, the enduring things, and that, in the vista of years, the trivial and insignificant get blotted out. Yet I don't think I shall uphold the statement when I tell you that at this moment, roving back over the past, I recall equally well my aunt reading the Bible, a joke we children once played on an old Granny, my uncle Penberthy in a rare passion, and —the comic waddling of a lame duck across the roadway, falling over itself in haste to reach the evening meal! I don't think I can justify the lame duck as a chief event in my youth. It is evidently one of the trivialities which get permanently photographed on the memory."

He had, however, an abiding mental picture of the place and its people. He remembered Halsetown as "a village nestling between sloping hills, bare and desolate, disfigured by great heaps of slack from the mines, and with the Knill monument standing prominent as a landmark to the east. It was a wild and weird place, fascinating in its own peculiar beauty, and taking a more definite shape in my youthful imagination by reason of the fancies and legends of the people. The stories attaching to rock, and well, and hill, were unending; every man and woman had folklore to tell us youngsters. We took to them naturally—they seemed to fit in wisely with the solitudes, the expanses, the superstitious character of the

Cornish people, and never clashed in our minds with the scriptural teachings which were our daily portion at home. These legends and fairy stories have remained with me but vaguely—I was too young—but I remember the 'guise-dancing,' when the villagers went about in masks, entering houses and frightening the children. We imitated this once, by breaking in on old Granny Dixon's sleep, fashioned out in horns and tails, and trying to frighten her into repentance for telling us stories of hell-fire and brimstone"—an attempt that was none too successful.

Halsetown gave the boy a healthy start in life. In after life, he attributed much of his ability to endure fatigue "to the free, and open, and healthy years I lived at Halsetown, and to the simple food and regular routine ordained by my aunt. We rambled much over the desolate hills, or down to the rocks at the seashore. There was plenty of natural beauty to look for, and I suppose that we looked for it. I know the sea had a potent attraction for me. I was a wiry youth, as I believe, when the time came for me to join a London school." There may possibly have been more volumes in his uncle's house than those of the Bible, some old English ballads, and "Don Quixote," but these were the only ones which he could recall in 1883. His uncle was a big man, bearded, broad in the shoulders, a trifle rough perhaps, and possessed of a Celtic temper. "He was a man born to command and to be loved. I can hardly describe to you how dominating was his personality, and yet how lovable. I remember that my aunt, my cousins, and myself went to meet him coming home from the mines every evening, that his greeting was boisterously affectionate, and that we knew no better task than to win his approval. I find this the more remarkable when I remember my aunt. It was the union of two strong individualities. She was a woman of severe simplicity in dress—the straight lines of her gowns are before me now—and deeply religious in character. It was the time of the great religious revival in Cornwall. My aunt was a teetotaller and a Methodist, and her whole life was coloured by her convictions. Perhaps the stern asceticism of the daily routine imposed by my aunt may have jarred upon us youngsters, but it was tempered by strong affection. At any rate, the angles have worn off that recollection. My aunt inspired both respect and affection among us, and I have no doubt that her discipline was good and healthful." This admirable woman survived her husband for many years and lived to witness the triumph of her nephew.

In the year 1849, the boy was removed from Cornwall to London, and sent to the City Commercial School, George Yard, Lombard Street. It was not long before his early instincts came into being, for, at one of the school entertainments, which were held at Sussex Hall, Leadenhall Street, he wished to recite "The Uncle," by Edward Glassford Bell, a gruesome poem, to the weirdness of which he did ample justice in his maturer years. The worthy schoolmaster, however, with good humour and sound discretion, selected Curran's "Defence of Hamilton Rowan". One of these school entertainments was witnessed by a well-known tragedian of the day, William Creswick, who, on 10th December, 1879, at a benefit given at the Lyceum by the great actor-manager in aid of a brother player, made a speech in which he described the circumstances: "I was once invited to hear some schoolboys recite speeches previous to their breaking up for the holidays. The schoolmaster was an old friend of mine, whom I very much respected. The room was filled from wall to wall with the parents and friends of the pupils. I was not much entertained with the first part. I must confess that I was a little bored. But suddenly there came out a lad who struck me as being a little uncommon, and he riveted my attention. The performance, I think, was a scene from 'Ion,' in which he played Adrastus. I well saw that he left his schoolfellows a long way behind. That schoolboy was Master Henry Irving. Seeing that he had dramatic aptitude, I gave him a word of encouragement, perhaps the first he had ever received, and certainly the first he had ever received from one in the dramatic profession, to which he is now a distinguished honour." There was a Shakespearean touch about the name of the principal of the school, Pinches, and one of the masters rejoiced in the name of Dickens.

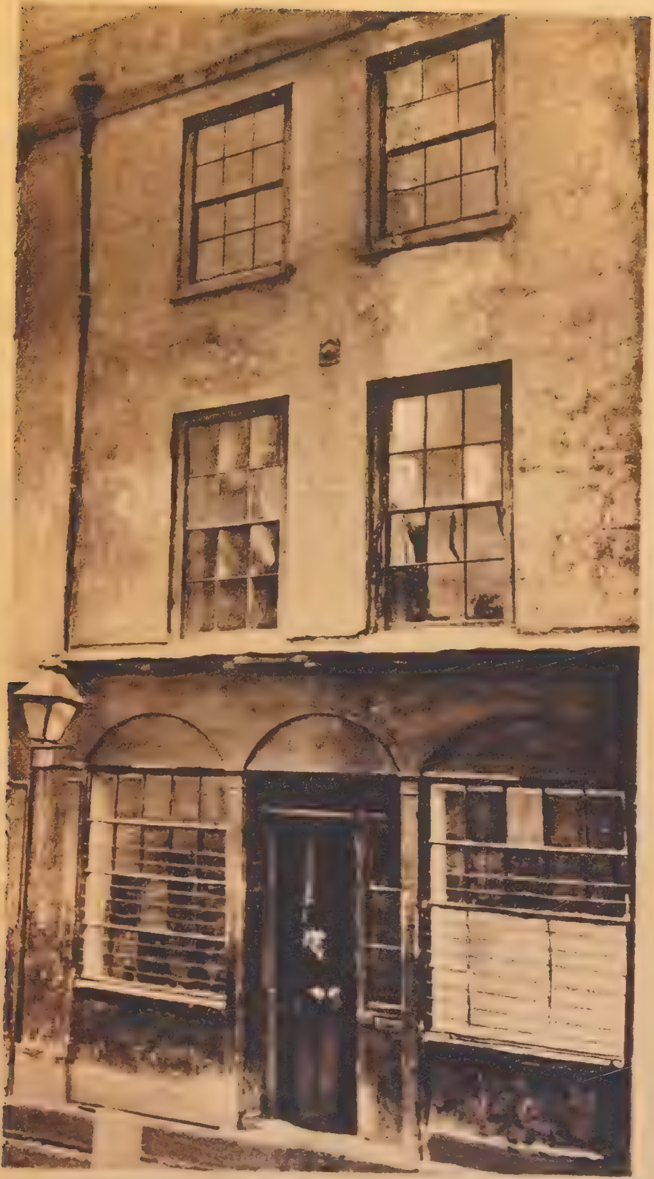
The boys had to write formal letters to their parents – although their homes were within a little walking distance from George Yard—before the Christmas holidays and invite them to the distribution of prizes and the entertainment which followed. For this purpose, they were provided with elaborate letter paper, the margin of which was stamped with coats of arms and laudable injunctions in Latin, "Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax," being the most prominent of the precepts. But our hero had to take to heart no motto more strongly than that conveyed in the single word "Perseverando" which stood for a lonely knight in armour in the corner where John Henry Brodribb signed his name when inviting his father and mother to Sussex Hall in December, 1850. The boy's home was in the City, at 65 Old Broad Street—the original building was demolished some years since for modern offices, the site being marked by the Dresdner Bank—where his parents occupied the top floor. Master Henry cared more for white mice than schoolbooks, and arithmetic was an abomination to him. So his friend in the school, Edward Plumbridge, frequently did his sums for him in the evening, and, as he was his monitor at George Yard, certified to their correctness on the next morning—an admirable arrangement! Young Brodribb had thus early developed a taste for play-acting, and he often practised, with a wooden sword as tall as himself, the defeat of the enemy. His companion in these childish pranks was almost his exact age—Mr. Plumbridge was born in the same year and month, but nine days later. He is still hale and hearty and carries his seventy years with the alertness and vivacity of a man of forty. His father was an importer of fruit and nuts, and the family resided in premises, above the warehouse, in Botolph Lane. Here young Brodribb often came to play. These early recollections were uppermost in his thoughts within a few weeks of his death. For, one night at the end of July, 1905, he told the present writer of these evenings in Botolph Lane. His memory was impressed by the circumstances that it was a point of honour with the boys that although they could play among the stores as much as they liked, they should not take a single nut—and the freshness of that recollection has recently been confirmed by young Brodribb's school-mate. The nuts were brought from Spain in a schooner, the *Hawk*, owned by Mr. Plumbridge, senior, and were shot loose into the cellar. The playmates sank up to their knees in them and progress was slow. The boys left school in the same year, 1851, and, as is often the case with those whose walks of life are divergent, the young friends drifted apart. But it is pleasant to know that they did not forget each other. For, when Henry Irving returned to London in 1866, one of his first duties was to seek out his old school friend in the City and invite him to the theatre. Mr. Plumbridge has nothing but kindly recollections of "young Brodribb," and of his mother—"a tall and homely body, whom anyone would like". Strictly speaking, the City Commercial School stood in Ball Alley, which can be entered from Gracechurch Street and Lombard Street, as well as from George Yard.

It was one of the most delightful traits in the nature of Henry Irving that he invariably spoke with kindness of his old associates. In this respect, we have two more charming glimpses of his youthful days. On leaving school in 1851, he was placed in the office of a firm of lawyers in the City of London, Paterson and Longman, Milk Street, Cheapside, a locality famous as the birthplace of Sir Thomas More. Being requested in after years by the daughter of one of the partners to give some information on the point, he wrote as follows:—

"*28th September*, 1892.

"DEAR MADAM,—It is quite true that I was in Mr. Churchill-Longman's office. I was very young at the time, not more than thirteen, but I remember your father and his kindness very well. Mr. Paterson I have known all my life, but I have not seen him for the last year or two.

"Yours faithfully,
"HENRY IRVING."



From a photograph.

Botolph Lane.

Having gone through the usual routine of a junior clerk for a twelvemonth, the boy was taken from the lawyer's office in Milk Street and placed with a firm of East India merchants, in Newgate Street, with the prospect of going to India and attaining an excellent position in the commercial world. But commerce had no attraction for him. All his thoughts were turned to the stage. Thus early, he had determined upon his future profession, and he bent his mind to the accomplishment of his purpose; every possible moment that could be spared from his regular work was devoted to the study of plays and poems. Not only did he earn his own living at the age of thirteen, but, out of the little pocket-money which his mother could spare from her earnings as caretaker of the offices over which she and her son lived, he managed to buy a few books. He frequently rose at four in the morning, walked to Thames-side for a bath, and fared chiefly on bread and butter. He led this arduous life for several years.

But he never forgot these early days in Newgate Street, and, when he was on the threshold of his London career, he remembered the manager of the East India merchants' office. On the day before he started his engagement at the St. James's Theatre, he sent him a letter, signed, it will be observed, in his real name, the old-fashioned courtesy of which is very striking:—

"8 OLD QUEBEC ST.,
"BRYANSTON SQUARE,
"*5th October*, '66.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I make my first appearance at the St. James's on Saturday evening.

"If you be inclined (for old remembrance) to see me, please fill in date to enclosed for that night or any other that may suit you better.

"With best wishes,
"Very faithfully yours,
"HENRY BRODRIBB.

"Should you write to me, direct please to Henry Irving.

"H. R. BLACKWELL, Esq."

When the future actor was in his seventeenth year, he gave some indications of his dramatic powers. In 1853, he joined the City Elocution Class, a sort of mutual improvement society, the members of which criticised one another's efforts, presided over by Henry Thomas, a man of considerable ability as a teacher. These classes were first held in Gould Square, Fenchurch Street, and subsequently in Sussex Hall. One evening a youth of some fifteen years of age presented himself. His appearance was such as would make ladies exclaim "What a nice boy!" He was rather tall for his age, dressed in a black cloth suit, with a round jacket, over the top of which was turned a deep white linen collar. His face was very handsome, with a mass of wavy, black hair, and eyes bright and flashing with intelligence. He was called upon for his first recitation, and he fairly electrified the class with a display of elocutionary skill and dramatic intensity. John Henry Brodribb—as he was still known—became a great favourite in the class, and his efforts as an amateur were recognised in print. The "Theatrical Journal" has long ceased to exist, but its pages contained the earliest public references to the embryo actor. A certain Thomas William Cooper, writing in the issue of Wednesday, 4th January, 1854, gives some interesting details of an entertainment in the middle of the previous month at the Sussex Hall. The programme began with a scene from "The Rivals". "Mr. Brodribb, as Captain Absolute, and Mr. Dyall, as Sir Anthony, played their parts with a very intelligent tact and with great credit to their teacher, Mr. Thomas." Later on, "'The Last Days of Herculaneum' was given in a style worthy the talented powers of so young a Roscius as Mr. Brodribb". On 11th April, 1854, the farce, "Catching an Heiress," concluded the entertainment at Sussex Hall, and "both Mr. Cooper and Mr. Brodribb were also well up in their characters, and are deserving of particular mention". In the following autumn, "Mr. Brodribb" won favourable mention for his acting in the farce, "My Wife's Dentist".

The Mr. Dyall who is here mentioned, for many years the curator of the Liverpool Art Gallery, was an intimate and life-long friend of the man and the actor. His recollections of the City Elocution Class are very interesting, for he was a member when young Brodribb joined it. Mr. Dyall recalls the original class-room, which was under a railway arch in Gould Square, but the only piece which he saw there was a farce, "The Mummy," in which the youthful comedian, J. L. Toole, appeared. His remembrance of Mr. Thomas is that of a "bright, genial, sunny, mercurial, and eminently lovable man. In his dramatic proclivities, he was a follower of Charles Mathews, and undertook, with much go and spirit, the same kind of parts. His wife was a buxom little woman, brimming over with fun; not ethereal enough for the young heroines, but invaluable in such parts as 'Little Toddlekins,' for whose acceptance I, as Sir Barnaby Babbicome, brought in the little mannikin. When the Elocution Class held its meetings in Sussex Hall, we found it a very cosy and comfortable room; well seated, and with a very handsome white balustrade running across to within twenty feet of the length. The club fitted up the stage portion with two three-fold screens, having a practical door in the centre of each; these were handsomely papered, a darker paper being used for the doors. An opening at the back, with drapery, left another means for exits and entrances; with a few chairs and a table or two, a vase of flowers and some ornaments, we had a very effective drawing-room for the small pieces we played. The weekly meetings of the club were devoted to recitations by the members, with Henry Thomas as chairman. The only teaching was by mutual criticism; the members helping each other to pick up dropped 'h's,' and put them in their proper places; pointing out wrong accents, bad pronunciation, inappropriate gesture, awkward positions of the hands and feet, etc. These criticisms did great good to the members of the class, especially in the matter of extempore speaking. The pieces played were mostly of a light character, many of them are now almost forgotten, but they were highly appreciated at the time.

They consisted of 'Boots at the Swan,' 'Delicate Ground,' 'The Man with the Carpet Bag,' 'Love in Humble Life,' 'Who Speaks First,' 'Little Toddlekins,' 'A Silent Woman,' and others of a like class suitable for presentation as drawing-room performances. The new member of the City Elocution Class soon became a great favourite at these meetings, every opportunity being taken to cast him for such parts as his youthful appearance would admit of. He was successful in everything he undertook, and when opportunity served he displayed unmistakable gifts. One of the rules of the class was, that each member should know the words of his part, and any one failing in this respect met with the utmost ridicule. Our young member was always letter-perfect, so that his mind was free to give due effect to the author's meaning. But it was in recitation that, at this time, he appeared to the greatest advantage, his youth being against his assumption of manly parts. One of his most successful efforts at this period was the part of Wilford, in selected scenes from 'The Iron Chest,' the Sir Edward Mortimer being myself. On this occasion his lines were given with such force, earnestness, and pathos, as to elicit the most enthusiastic applause."

A performance given by the students of the City Elocution Class at the Soho Theatre—now the Royalty—was always impressed upon our hero. The old comedy, "The Honeymoon," was represented, and Mr. Thomas's pupils appeared in "all the glory of tights, silk cloaks, and hats and feathers". Many years afterwards, in July, 1884, the Irving Amateur Dramatic Club entertained their president, after whom their club had been named, at supper in the Freemasons' Tavern, where he spoke of this, his first performance in a regular theatre: "Amateur acting is a very different thing to what it was when I was a young man—and I am not like that horrible old playgoer who sits upon everything and calls it bad. I believe that you act under many advantages that were not enjoyed by amateurs in the past—certainly, as far as my experience goes. I was once a member of what was called an elocution class, and we suffered under one disadvantage—we had not the pleasure of enjoying the society of amiable and accomplished ladies. We chose pieces in which the ladies had not very prominent parts, and, wherever the parts were, they were cut down. Sometimes, the chambermaid was transformed into some hobbledehoy young man, and the entertainments, I dare say, were not very interesting. But I remember that I once did take part in an amateur performance, the only occasion in my life when my ambition was satisfied, where there was a real stage, and real scenery, real footlights, real dresses, real everything. We had the Soho Theatre, and they had a rather peculiar method there. The amateurs who wanted to furnish parts, paid different prices. The prices seemed to vary according to the vice or the virtue of the characters—two guineas for Iago, three guineas for Romeo. I had three guineas' worth, and it was rather a memorable occasion for me—and to those, I should think, who saw me! Rehearsals were out of the question altogether, and the supporters were principally a lot of superannuated actors. Of course, the cast was conducted by any confiding amateur; they were glad to get the money, and if not they were happy to have emergency men. I had a costume; it was a sort of red cotton-velvet shirt on a pair of white cotton legs, a very tall black hat and two white feathers, very large black shoes and blue rosettes. What I remember particularly was—I certainly will take credit to myself—I got lost once or twice in the scenery. Being at the time a young man, I thought it necessary to wear a wig, and during one part of the performance I lost that, too; and also, my dagger. However, I got through to the entire satisfaction of some ten or twelve friends of mine—young clerks in the City—and I cannot tell you whether the event was recorded in any of the theatrical papers of the time, but at any rate there was not much Italian romance about the business, though certainly I went to work like a man and a Briton, that I will say. But at all events, you may belong, my friends, to an elocution class, and learn the rules and the method, and when you become an actor with some little reputation, you may find perhaps at last you are not able to make your speech intelligible."

On an another occasion, when addressing, in 1885, the students of Harvard College, he said that, as a boy, he had a habit which he thought "would be useful to all students. Before going to see a play of Shakespeare's, I used to form—in a very juvenile way—a theory as to the working out of the whole drama, so as to correct my conceptions by those of the actors, and though I was, as a rule, absolutely wrong, there can be no doubt that any method of independent study is of enormous importance, not only to youngsters, but also to students of a larger growth." In the light of these words, it is interesting to know that his first visit to a theatre was to Sadler's Wells, where he had the advantage of seeing Samuel Phelps as Hamlet. This performance was indelibly impressed on his memory, and he often told the friends of his manhood of the pleasure which he derived from it. Another vivid recollection was his first visit to a theatre alone. He sat in the gallery of the Adelphi Theatre, depressed by a sense of wickedness, and with a feeling that the gallery would probably fall into the pit for his particular punishment. But a neighbour entered into conversation with him, his spirits revived, and he became so interested in the entertainment—which consisted of "The Haunted Man," "The Enchanted Isle," and the farce, "Slasher and Crasher"—that he left the theatre with reluctance at one in the morning, after six hours' enjoyment, and arrived home an hour later to find his mother awaiting him in a state of terrible anxiety.

But the study of books, his amateurish efforts in the City Elocution Class, and his witnessing of Shakespeare at Sadler's Wells, were not his only means of preparation for his future career. About the year 1854, he enlisted the sympathy of a member of Phelps's company, William Hoskins,[1] who was so much impressed by the earnestness and capability of the boy, that he rendered him far more assistance than strict duty demanded of him. For the youth had to be at his office soon after nine o'clock, and, in order to accommodate his pupil, Hoskins began his teaching at eight—an early hour for any one in the theatrical profession—at his house in Myddleton Square. The kind old actor became so pleased with the progress of the youth, that he introduced him to Phelps. The tragedian, after hearing the aspirant recite Othello's Address to the Senate, smiled a kind approval. But he urged him not to join such an ill-requited profession as that of the player. "Well, sir," said the ambitious amateur, "it seems strange that such advice should come from you; seeing that you enjoy so great a reputation as an actor, I think I shall take my chance and go upon the stage." "In that case, sir," was the encouraging reply, "you may come next season to Sadler's Wells, and I'll give you two pounds a week to begin with." Young Brodribb, completely taken aback, could only stammer a few words of grateful thanks, but he did not accept the flattering offer. He had determined to begin his career in the provinces. At this important point in his life, Hoskins stepped into the breach. He was on the eve of sailing for Australia, and he approached Mrs. Brodribb with an offer, if she would allow her son to accompany him, of an engagement at five pounds per week. Fortunately, the offer was not accepted, whereupon Hoskins told Mrs. Brodribb that the time would

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[1] Hoskins was a man of education. His father was Alexander Hoskins, of Newton Hall, Derbyshire, and he was educated at Oxford. He went on the stage in 1834, in his nineteenth year, and eventually became a member of Phelps's company at Sadler's Wells, He played Austin Tresham in "A

Blot in the 'Scutcheon," and Buckingham in "Henry VIII." He remained in Australia for thirty years, and was greatly respected. In the gold rush, he made £50,000, nearly all of which he subsequently lost in theatrical management in Melbourne. But New Zealand brought him another spell of luck, and on his marriage there to a popular actress, Miss Florence Colville, the ceremony was attended by a notable gathering, which included the Governor of the colony, various Ministers of the Crown, members of Parliament, and other prominent persons. His death took place in Melbourne, at the age of seventy-one, on 28th September, 1886. Soon afterwards, a meeting was held in that city in order to devise a scheme in honour of the old actor and manager. The first communication read to the assembly was a cablegram from the pupil whom he had befriended thirty years before, which said: "Please add hundred pounds remembrance dear old friend Hoskins.—Henry Irving".

come when her child would earn fifty pounds a night. It may be proper to remark that the mother of the future actor-manager of the Lyceum had an innate dread of her son going upon the stage. "I used frequently," says Mr. Dyall, "to visit at the house in Broad Street for the purpose of rehearsing the scenes in which John and I were to act together. I remember her as being rather tall, somewhat stately, and very gentle. On one occasion, she came to me with tears in her eyes and implored me to dissuade John from thinking of the stage as a profession, and, having read much of the vicissitudes of actors' lives, their hardships and the precariousness of their employment, I joined my voice to hers to try and prevent him." As Hoskins could not induce the ambitious lad to go to Australia with him, he gave him a letter to a well-known manager, E. D. Davis, saying: "You will go upon the stage. When you want an engagement, present that letter, and you will find one." This kind friend sailed for Sydney early in 1856, and, by September of that year, his talismanic letter had opened the portals of fame to Henry Irving—for as Brodribb he passes out of this story.

CHAPTER II.

1856-1859.

Enter, Henry Irving—His study of fencing—Purchase of "properties"—Sets out for Sunderland—His first appearance on the stage—His extreme nervousness—Advised to return to London—Begins a long engagement in Edinburgh—Criticised, but encouraged, by the press—Praised for his attention to details—Always letter-perfect—Acts with various "stars"—Cloten to Helen Faucit's Imogen—Beauséant, in "The Lady of Lyons"—Venoma, a spiteful fairy—"Frizzling and grizzling"—Cyril Baliol, a successful impersonation—Irving in burlesque—Plays Claude Melnotte for his benefit—His first speech—Leaves Edinburgh for London.

When Henry Irving set out for Sunderland, where he was to make his first appearance in the regular theatre, he was well-equipped for his self-appointed task. Youth—for he was but eighteen and a half years of age—and an iron constitution were on his side. He had, as we have seen, studied assiduously for his adopted profession, and he had practised, as much as was possible, on the amateur stage. During those hard-working years of his youth in London he had also taken lessons in dancing, and, for a long time—two years—he went twice a week to Shury's school of arms, in Chancery Lane, where he studied and practised fencing. This practice, it may be well to note in this place, he never allowed to lapse until he had become one of the best swordsmen on the theatrical boards; he continued his practice in fencing when in Edinburgh under a well-known master of the art, Captain Roland, and, in London, at Angelo's. But, when he arrived in Sunderland, he had some minor qualifications, in addition to those enumerated, for the work that was before him. He had had a little money left to him, and, as actors in those days were obliged to provide certain articles generally known as "properties"—wigs, tights, swords, shoes, and gloves—he had laid in an ample stock of these things. Even then, his small store of cash was not exhausted, so that the irony of a certain remark which appeared in reference to his first performance, caused him much quiet amusement, and he never forgot it. When he arrived in Sunderland, two weeks before the opening of the theatre, he had some difficulty in finding the establishment, for it was in the hands of the builders and surrounded by hoardings. The rehearsals were conducted in a state of confusion, and, when the theatre was at last opened, he was so afraid of his beloved properties being stolen if they were left in the dressing-room, that he carried them to and from the playhouse, to his lodgings, two miles away, each night, in a carpet bag. His landlady was proud, in after years, of this early association. She had two lodgers—the embryo actor and a curate—and it often happened that the former would be reciting his part in one room, while the young clergyman was declaiming his sermon in another. Even then, Irving was remarkable for his punctuality, in his private, as in his public, engagements. Forty-eight years afterwards, in a speech which he made on the occasion of a public presentation to him in Sunderland, he spoke of this momentous period in his career: "It is a long time ago, close upon half a century, and I cannot flatter myself that any of you—even the oldest—have any personal recollection of that event. Indeed, I may say with confidence, that I am the only person who is qualified to give a plain, unvarnished account of what happened here on the night of 18th September, 1856, when the play of 'Richelieu' was produced at the Lyceum Theatre; and not only that evening is vivid in my memory, but the whole preceding fortnight, for such was my eagerness to lose no opportunity, to leave nothing to chance, that I arrived in Sunderland before the theatre was built. The first night was passed at an hotel, and there, too, my advent was premature. The magnificence of hotels was not suited to that period of my apprenticeship, so I took a lodging a mile or two out of the town, and walked in every morning to superintend the building operations, and to wonder how on earth they would be finished in time for my first appearance on any stage. Well, the builders did finish their work—perhaps, after all, they knew what was at stake—and 'Richelieu' was prepared with most disconcerting haste; and the boy, full of trembling hope, saw the curtain which shielded him from the audience rise abruptly, and then he had to speak the opening words of the play—'Here's to our enterprise!' Gaston, Duke of Orleans, is represented by the dramatist as a bit of a craven, but he could never have been so afraid of the Cardinal as I was of Sunderland when I tried to utter those words. I cannot truthfully say-—for I feel the responsibility of being the only witness-—I cannot truthfully say that he did utter them. 'Our enterprise,' my enterprise, stuck in his throat. At any rate, it made entirely the wrong impression, for one critic of that performance urged the actor to take the first steamer back to his comfortable home, and abandon all idea of pursuing a vocation for which he was manifestly unfitted. I remember so well that the 'first steamer' was recommended, not the first train, and I suppose the critic wanted to associate my penitential departure with the thriving sea traffic of your great port, and so point the contrast between my final discomfiture and your increasing prosperity. Certainly the voyage would have given me ample time to ponder the enormity of my presumption. But I did not go. I stayed here five months, learning useful lessons of perseverance by the helpful kindness of my old manager, Mr. E. D. Davis, and of the Sunderland playgoers, whom I found to be extremely patient, for they received me with the utmost good humour in the singing part of Henry Bertram, for which my confiding manager had cast me, as adequate support to Charlotte Cushman in her great character of Merrilies."

From another account, furnished by Mr. Alfred Davis, the son of the manager of the Sunderland theatre, it seems that Henry Irving did actually speak that oft-quoted line, "Here's to our enterprise!"—the first words in "Richelieu"—on this historic occasion. "The words of the speech had in them," said Mr. Davis, "almost a prophetic tone of aspiration and success.

So busy was I in front, and behind the scenes, that I was barely able to reach my place on the stage in time for the rising of the curtain. I kept my back to the audience till my cue to speak was given, all the while buttoning up, tying and finishing my dressing generally, so that scant attention would be given to others. But, even under these circumstances, I was compelled to notice, and with perfect appreciation, the great and most minute care which had been bestowed by our aspirant on the completion of his costume. In those days, managers provided the mere dress. Accessories, in 'properties,' as they were called, were found by the actor. Henry Irving was, from his splendid white hat and feathers, to the tips of his shoes, a perfect picture; and, no doubt, had borrowed his authority from some historical picture of the Louis XIII. period." The new house, curiously enough, in the light of after events, was called the Lyceum; Alfred Davis was the Sieur de Beringhen in Bulwer Lytton's play, Richelieu being taken by the proprietor and manager of the theatre, E. D. Davis. The programme concluded with a burlesque, "The Enchanted Lake," in which Irving was one of five cooks. On the next evening, he was the second officer in "The Lady of Lyons". During the week, "The Merchant of Venice" was given with an actor who was afterwards engaged by Irving for some of his productions at the Lyceum as Shylock. This was Thomas Mead. Another actor remembered by Irving when he had become famous, and long a member of his Lyceum company, was Samuel Johnson, the low comedian of Irving's first season on the stage. Still later on, Alfred Davis came to the Lyceum for work, and found it.

Despite his nervousness, Irving's first week in Sunderland passed off creditably. But he was much discomfited when called upon to play Cleomenes in "The Winter's Tale," an undertaking with which he had to "double" the part of a "third gentleman". The part is a fairly long one for a novice, and, unfortunately for the aspirant to theatrical honours, the revival was fixed for the Monday. Irving's religious training had taught him to hold Sunday as a day of rest, and, relying upon his powers of study, he left the learning of his words until the day of the performance. The result was unforeseen, almost disastrous. All went well until the fifth act, when the young actor completely forgot his words, and, interpolating some lines from another play, exclaimed, to the astonishment of his comrades on the stage, "Come on to the market-place, and I'll tell you further," and vanished into the wings. His manager, however, put down his failure to the natural nervousness of the novice, and, instead of dispensing with his services, gave him some sound, practical advice. It is also more than probable that Mr. Davis bore in mind the fact that, for the first month of his engagement, young Irving received no financial reward for his services. Nor did he receive any other encouragement, for the newspaper notice of his acting in Sunderland which has come down to us condemned him severely. "The minor parts," said the local critic, "were creditably performed, with the exception of Cleomenes, by Mr. Irving, who utterly ruined the last scene but one, where he should have described Leontes' discovery of his daughter. He came on the stage without knowing a single word of his part, and, although he had the cue pitched at him by the prompter in a tone loud enough to be heard in most parts of the house, he was unable to follow it, and was compelled to walk off the stage amid a shower of hisses." This was an unpromising beginning, but it had its lesson, for it was the first and last time that such a fault was ever committed by Henry Irving. He remained in Sunderland until February, and, although he had made such progress that Mr. Davis would have gladly retained him, he decided to go to Edinburgh, where he had obtained an engagement which proved most advantageous to him. In addition to Charlotte Cushman, Miss Glyn, Sims Reeves, Ira Aldridge—"the African Roscius," as the coloured tragedian was called—and other players of importance appeared in Sunderland during Irving's stay there. So that he had the opportunity of seeing much acting that was exceedingly good and of great variety. After the first month, he received a salary of twenty-five shillings a week—a fair wage for a beginner on the stage half a century ago and even later still.

The Edinburgh engagement was of vast importance to the young actor. It lasted for two and a half years, during which he played a marvellous number of parts. He also had the advantage of studying the methods of the best representatives of the old school of acting. To say that he worked assiduously during this period is only to indicate one of the merits which marked his life-work. Ever ardent and alert in the pursuit of his art, he was singled out in these early days for the scrupulous care with which he dressed his parts and for the exactitude of his facial make-up. More important still, he was almost invariably letter-perfect. He was constantly held out in these three paramount points of the threatrical embryo as a model for the other members of the company. Naturally enough, his perfection in these particulars created a certain amount of envy, but it won him a great deal of admiration. And, in later years, it was a tremendous aid to him. He was by nature thorough and determined. His work in Edinburgh, and, subsequently, in Manchester, strengthened these innate qualities, and, as he grew in years so they developed, helping him to the summit of his ambition and never being allowed to desert him. He was only just nineteen years of age when he began his engagement in Edinburgh, but, before he was twenty, he had made his mark, and the press, which was much more out-spoken half a century ago than it is at present, had recognised his good qualities. It had also noted some of his defects. His manager here was R. H. Wyndham.

The bill of the play for Saturday, 7th February, 1857, heralded the return to Edinburgh, after an absence of eight years, of Barry Sullivan, an admirable actor in a deep-voiced, physically-strong fashion, who was justly popular in the north of England, particularly in Liverpool and Manchester, and in Dublin. One of the parts in which he drew crowded houses was Richelieu, and it was in the familiar rôle of Gaston, Duke of Orleans, that Henry Irving first played at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, the Irish tragedian being the Cardinal.

He was again chosen for this part some three weeks later, when an actor whose name has long passed away, was the Richelieu. On the latter occasion, "Richelieu" was followed by a "grand ballet divertissement," the programme concluding with a lively nautical drama entitled "The Pilot," which painted in very glowing colours the supremacy of the British navy. Its chief character was Long Tom Coffin, who had a truly "desperate combat" with a rival. The piece concluded with a "general combat and the final triumph of the British Flag". For those were the days of patriotism. It is also to be observed that the audience had plenty for their money at that period. A ballet and a fairly long after-piece—in which, by the way, Irving's part was a small one—may be considered a pretty good return for a place in the gallery for sixpence or a seat for half a crown—the highest price—in the dress-circle. The doors were opened at seven o'clock each evening, with the exception of Saturday, when half-past six was the time, the performance beginning half an hour later.

Between his two appearances as Gaston at the Theatre Royal, Irving acted several minor parts including that of Baron Giordine in "The Corsican Brothers" and another "walking gentleman," Antoine, Sieur de Courcy, an esquire to the Court, in a five-act melodrama "The Cagot! or Heart for Heart". In the middle of March, an "actress and pantomimist" appeared in Edinburgh whose advent was so important that it was advertised that "during the engagement of this distinguished Artiste the complimentary Free List (with the exception of the Gentlemen of the Press) will be entirely suspended". The "Gentlemen of the Press" is good. They were polite to newspaper critics in those times. The "distinguished artiste" was Madame Celeste, who took the title rôle in a drama called "The Mysterious Stranger". She also essayed four other characters, with an additional mark of exclamation to each, so that when the celebrated actress had arrived on the programme at the part of a Young French Officer—having, in the meantime, impersonated a Wild French Boy, an Italian Prima Donna, and a Polish Princess

—she had won the distinction of being set down as "Madame Celeste ! ! ! ! !" Irving's part was a minor one, that of Captain Gasconade. It is unnecessary to enumerate in this place all the characters which fell to the lot of the young actor during his first twelve months in Edinburgh, but it may be noted that, during May, he played some Shakespearean parts which prove conclusively that he had earned the good opinion of his manager. These were Horatio in "Hamlet," Banquo in "Macbeth," and Catesby in "King Richard III." He often thought of his early training when he was playing the chief characters in these tragedies at the Lyceum. In June of this year, 1857, he met an actor who became his life-long friend, John Laurence Toole. The comedian appeared as Autolycus in a burlesque of "The Winter's Tale," Irving being the Camillo. With Toole as Paul Pry, he acted Harry Stanley in Poole's comedy ; and he played Dazzle in "London Assurance," the star of Dion Boucicault's comedy being Sir William Don, Bart., whose title was a greater attraction than his acting. He also acted various other characters with this gentleman, including one that is known to many playgoers of a later generation—Charley the Carpenter, in the "screaming farce," as it was called, of "Good for Nothing".

He then had the advantage of appearing with Helen Faucit, in "Cymbeline," and we have an interesting reminiscence from an Edinburgh resident who witnessed Irving's performance. This admirer subsequently recalled the experience: "Charles Dickens somewhere remarked that, 'The check-taker never sees the play ;' but on this occasion it happened otherwise, for the Bed-chamber scene in Act II. was proceeding as my check was demanded—in the gallery, of course—whither I had betaken myself. This impressive scene had a powerful effect, as may be supposed ; and 'When the well-bred actor,' etc.—the following scene, charged as it is with the charming song, 'Hark, hark, the lark'—was barely listened to until Imogen again appears, and at every turn scathes poor Cloten. Towards the end of that scene, Pisanio—

A sly and constant knave; not to be shak'd—
The agent for his master—

came on the stage—a tall, thin, angular, nervous-looking young man, and a stranger evidently. Says the check-taker, in answer to a question, 'That's a young man lately joined the company. He's on his mettle, and will give a good account of himself to-night.' This was the future tragedian, Henry Irving. Pale and anxious he looked, and eager to do his best with his limited stock of stagecraft, hitherto perfect. I well remember he went through the trying business of Scene II., Act III., but made no special impression, overshadowed as he was by the greater genius. Nevertheless, tyro as he was, he held his own, and soon afterwards shared in the triumphs of that memorable evening. It does take an audience some little time to discriminate the smaller lights when a brilliant genius is ever and again on the stage, and when the thoughts of all are wrapt in the representation of a character to which he or she is the only adequate exponent. That the soliloquy and scene previous to that now to be referred to more particularly was acceptable to the audience must be inferred, as it paved the way for what followed. In Scene IV., Act. III., wherein the agony of Imogen is delineated, and where the now doubly 'constant Pisanio' has but little to speak, but much to act, the audience seemed spell-bound—and so also seemed the trembling neophyte. Standing in the centre, facing the rapt audience, with the great queen of tragedy kneeling before him racked with anguish caused by foul slander on a fair soul, she draws Pisanio's sword, and, forcing it into his hand, reiterating her husband's order, 'Do his bidding, strike!' the pent-up feeling in the honest servitor's soul finds vent in the passionate:—

Hence, vile instrument;
Thou shalt not damn my hand!

This was said when and as it should be said, and the sword flung off the stage. The effect was electrical, and a round of hearty plaudits resounded from all parts of the house on the instant. The expression is often heard of a great actor 'reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning'. This was one flash, and an early one, from an actor who has now earned his name. Even here the inspiration of author and actress must have lifted him up, for the harmony was complete."

With the Christmas season, we find Irving as Scruncher, the Captain of the Wolves, in the pantomime of "Little Bo-Peep". All these parts had been played by him at the Theatre Royal. But in November of this same year, Wyndham had taken a lease of the Queen's Theatre and Opera House, and here, on the 28th of that month, Irving played Montano in "Othello," and, on the 14th of December, Rashleigh Osbaldistone in "Rob Roy". On 26th February, 1858, the last appearance in Edinburgh of Henry Vandenhoff was announced. He played Cardinal Wolsey in "King Henry VIII.," the part of the Earl of Surrey being allotted to Irving who, it will be gathered, was kept employed at both theatres—in Shakespeare Square and Leith Walk.

This year was a memorable one in the early career of the young actor, for he now began to attract considerable attention in the local press. The first page in his book of extracts, cut from the Edinburgh press, is of great interest. It is headed, in his own handwriting, 1858, and the initial comment is as follows: "Mr. Irving, although somewhat new to the stage, is rapidly becoming a good performer. A little more firmness would aid him considerably; but we think we see symptoms of his gaining this, and counsel him to continue. One thing in his favour, he is generally perfect." We can imagine with what gladness the earnest young actor gummed these encouraging words into his scrap-book! The second extract must also have helped him in his endeavour: "Mr. Irving is still rather nervous, but is holding on the right path to secure public esteem". As the disagreeable Beauséant in "The Lady of Lyons" he acted "so well that some of the audience in the closing scene were inclined to show their joy at his losing the hand of Pauline in a rather offensive manner—no mean testimony to the ability evinced in the part". Fergus Connor in Westland Marston's domestic drama, "A Hard

Struggle," brought him still more notice. He rendered the character, wrote one of the daily papers, "we need hardly say, with care and good taste, and, we may add, with a depth of feeling worthy of wider scope than the part afforded. No playgoer can have failed to notice the steady and rapid progress which this young actor is making in his profession, in which we have no doubt his perseverance and ability will at no distant day gain him a high position. In the study apparent in all his personations, and the invariable finish and propriety of his 'make-up,' it would be well if some other members of the company would try to imitate him." On another occasion, his acting did not meet with the approbation of a section of the spectators, or, as is not unlikely, the rise of the young player was not to the advantage of some other members of the company. "We noticed with regret," said one of the newspapers, "a disposition on the part of a certain class amongst the audience to receive Mr. Irving with marked disapprobation. Mr. Irving is a young actor of greater promise and intelligence than any who have appeared in the ranks of the Edinburgh company for a long time, and bids fair, when he has acquired wider stage experience, and smoothed down certain trifling mannerisms, to occupy a creditable position in his profession. His performances are generally marked by careful study, and his conception, if not always correct, invariably displays thought and feeling."

Thus early did his efforts encounter opposition, and the iron entered his soul. For, in taking leave of Edinburgh some twelve months later, he spoke of these uncomplimentary hisses. On the other hand, he was constantly encouraged by judicious criticism, and he pursued his course with unfaltering zeal. Thus in "An Hour at Seville"—a piece written for Mrs. Barney Williams, who played no less than eight parts in it—he had a long and arduous character to sustain as Mr. Peregrine Pyefinch. Moreover, he had no opportunity of leaving the stage and refreshing his memory, so that "the feat of being almost perfect in words was of itself no mean triumph. But when we state that he was not only perfect, or nearly so, in the words of the part—but that he acted throughout (despite a little nervousness) with a quiet ease and gentlemanly humour which perfectly fitted his part, we are only stating the truth; and we feel assured the audience quite appreciated his exertions". In order to realise this praise, it must be borne in mind that he frequently played three parts—some of which were entirely new—in one night. At this time, he was continually complimented on his care and earnestness, on his feeling, intelligence, and good taste. He had also arrived at the dignity of being called before the curtain, for, when he played Charles in "London Assurance," "the audience expressed their delight at the performance" by summoning all the "stars" of the cast—and Mr. Irving. He had another interesting experience in the pantomime which was produced during the winter season of 1858 at the Theatre Royal. At the first blush, it would not seem that Venoma, a spiteful fairy, could do much to enhance the fame of a serious young actor. Her abode formed the opening scene of the pantomime, and, according to a contemporary chronicle, it was "a gruesome place enough. Here we find the old hag 'frizzling and grizzling' herself on a gridiron. Not willingly does she submit to this unpleasant form of heating; a stronger power had doomed her to that punishment for fifty years, which period has all but expired when we make her acquaintance." It is difficult to see where originality could have scope in such a part, yet, "Mr. Irving's personation stamps him as an actor of more than average ability. This gentleman is well worthy of praise; whatever character he undertakes he invariably exerts himself to the utmost to give it effect. His 'make-up,' as it is termed, is perfect." By what standard the make-up of a wicked fairy in a pantomime is to be judged, is somewhat of a mystery. But that of Irving as Venoma must have been extremely effective, for another critic found it "astonishingly correct, even to the most minute detail".

Much more important work than the playing of the evil genius of a pantomime came with the turn of the year. And this new work won fresh honours and more encouragement. In February, 1859, a play called "Hamilton of Bothwellhaugh, or the Regent Murray of Linlithgow," was produced at the Royal. Irving had, as Cyril Baliol, a priest, to pourtray a character which was described as being Iago-like. "It would be unjust to many great actors who have failed as Iago to say that Mr. Irving's rendering of Cyril Baliol was perfect, but it is only 'fair to a talented and painstaking young artist to state that he succeeded to a degree even beyond the anticipation of his warmest admirers." So said one of the daily papers. The continuation of this criticism is instructive inasmuch as it throws a side-light on his acting at this time: "The quality Mr. Irving's characterisation most lacked was subtlety, its absence being less conspicuous in his voice and face than in his occasionally hurried manner of stepping across the stage". It is easy to understand that nervousness would give the rapidity of movement to the actor, which time taught him to control. Even so, that subtlety which was present to so large a degree in his later acting, was not manifest at the outset of his career. He was slowly, but surely, meeting with recognition from the critical press. The part of Cyril Baliol—a plotting priest—was a considerable advancement for him. "We have had occasion frequently to speak in high terms of the acting of Mr. Irving," wrote another leading journal, "but we were unprepared for his powerful delineation of the part of Cyril Baliol. It completely eclipses any of his previous efforts, much as they are entitled to praise; it is, in one word, one of the best pieces of acting we have witnessed for a considerable time. We will not go so far as to assert that it is altogether perfection, but this much we will say, that the faults are so few that we can easily afford to overlook them. He was honoured with a call at the end of the third act, and though we are no advocates for this custom, which would in many instances be 'more honoured in the breach than in the observance,' yet we think by his excellent acting he fairly won the honour so-called". In another play, called "The Vagrant," brought out at this time, he was given the chief part somewhat to the astonishment of this same discriminating critic, who confessed to being "not a little surprised to find" Mr. Irving as the leading character, "it being a part so different from any we have been accustomed to see him in. It is but justice to state that we were both surprised and gratified with his performance. It occurs to us that he is making rapid strides in his profession; and it would be well if some of the other members of the company, on whom we have our eye, were to pay as much attention, both to the business of the stage and to their style of dressing or 'getting-up,' as they call it, as he invariably does." This, it will be observed, was not the first time that he had been held up as a model for his fellow players, who could hardly have loved him for the admonishment. The management, however, made due note of his ability, and we find him, in March, appearing as Coitier to the Louis XI. of Charles Dillon and as the King to that actor's Hamlet. This was advancement indeed.

In short, with his impersonation of Cyril Baliol he emerged from the humble position of the mere tyro. He met with a considerable amount of criticism, but it was never harsh, never calculated to wound as was some of that which he experienced when he had attained celebrity. This, for instance, was written in a spirit of friendliness: "We notice in this gentleman's acting a slight tendency to mannerism—particularly in his walk and gestures; we pray him to avoid that, and to walk as nature dictates, not as actors strut. Mr. Irving is sure to rise in his profession, and he can quite afford to take our hints in the spirit in which they are meant." The criticism, like the prophecy, was good. It should be observed that his peculiar gait was noticed at the outset of his career, for it has been said that he cultivated it with a view to notoriety. On the contrary, it was natural to him, and it says much for his personality that the spectator—who was not actually opposed to him—never thought twice of his walk after witnessing one of his performances. That he valued the Edinburgh criticism is proved by the fact that he kept it. That his walk was a real detriment to him at this time is shown by his being given the parts of Fag in "The Rivals" and Careless in "The School for Scandal"—characters in which the strut of which complaint was made was unsuited. His progress was continuous. Four nights prior to the closing of the old Theatre Royal, "Macbeth," was revived. But, instead of Banquo, as two years previously, he now acted Macduff. On the last night of the old house, "Masks and Faces" was the chief item in the programme, with Mr. and Mrs. Wyndham as Triplet and Peg Woffington. Irving was the Soaper, and in the farce, "His Last Legs," he played Charley. This was on 25th May, 1859.

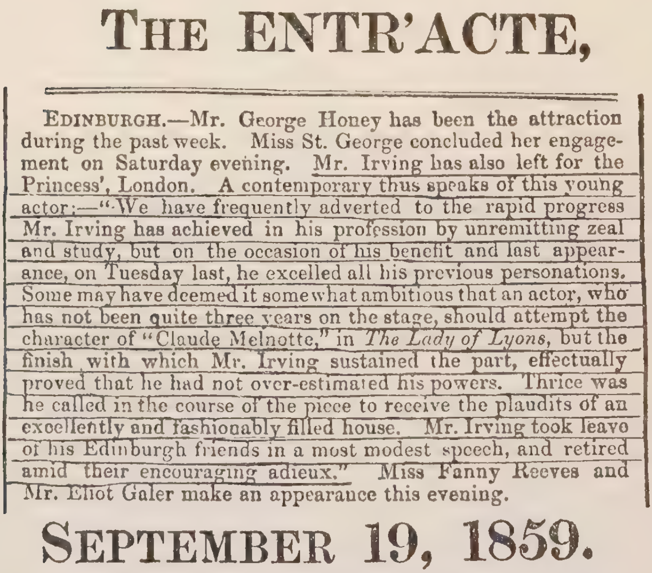
Wyndham now took possession of the Queen's Theatre, which he opened under royal letters patent, or as a fully-licensed house, on 25th June. Here, in burlesque, Irving made two of his greatest successes, and on its stage he took leave of the Edinburgh public before his departure for his first venture in London. In a burlesque which was wonderfully popular in its day, "The Maid and the Magpie," the "most cleverly enacted part was, undoubtedly, the Fernando Villabella of Mr. Irving. His 'make up' was most original, while his conception of the character was no less so." Again, "Mr. Irving—whom we are sorry that we are going to lose so soon—has been out-doing himself, and giving unmistakable earnest of his success in the new and more important sphere upon which he is about to enter. His 'make-up' as a refugee, and his rendering of the part in 'The Maid and Magpie,' were really beyond all praise." His make-up was often alluded to, and always in terms of commendation, at this time. It was much praised in William Brough's burlesque of "Kenilworth," in which he appeared as Wayland Smith. The critics fell foul of the travesty, and of a certain "popular comedian"—one Sydney—of whose voice it was said that "the grinding of scissors is a sound comparatively soft and inoffensive to the nerves". Irving, as Wayland Smith, made his first entrance in a half-famished condition at a fête at which Queen Elizabeth was present, and upon observing her he had to say, "'Tis long since I beheld a sovereign".

We cannot imagine that such work was very congenial to him. He also had, in common with some of the other members of the company, to take part in "that absurd dancing, which, having been successful as given by Mr. Robson and one or two more, has now been taken up by every actor on the stage. Mr. Irving is perhaps the only one at the Queen's who does it perfectly well." He played many parts in those months and these very different in style—Dazzle in "London Assurance," King James in "Cramond Brig," Ishmael in "The Flowers of the Forest," Frank Hawthorn in "Extremes," and, once more, the King in "Hamlet". A few nights before he left Edinburgh for the south, his acting in "French Before Breakfast" caused some laconic and amusing "criticism". "As to Fader-de-She," said the *North Briton*, "enacted by Mr. Irving, one may just repeat the rather energetic exclamation of a pit critic—'Damned good'."

The evening of Tuesday, 13th September, 1859, was a momentous one in the career of the young actor. For he then bade farewell to his friends of the press and the public in Edinburgh—he had many, and they were always faithful to him—in the character of Claude Melnotte. The occasion called forth much kindly comment, of which one specimen will suffice: "We observe from our advertising columns that Mr. Irving, a member of the dramatic company of the Queen's Theatre, is about to take a farewell benefit. Mr. Irving is one of the most rising actors among us; and it is with regret that we part with him. Always gentlemanly in his deportment, his conception of the parts he undertook was just and accurate; while his acting was marked by a taste and an ability that give promise of the highest excellence. We are sure that his numerous admirers here will take care by their presence to mark their strong sense of Mr. Irving's talents, and to encourage him in his future career."

Mr. Irving's "numerous admirers" did their duty, and there was what used to be described as a "bumper house". At the conclusion of "The Lady of Lyons," the hero of the night came forward, and, in the language of the play-bill, addressed a few words to his friends. This was his first public speech, and, for a man of twenty-one, it was a model of modesty and diplomacy. He said: " Ladies and gentlemen, I feel I have undertaken rather a difficult task—a task in which I fear I am liable to be charged with either ingratitude or presumption—ingratitude if I go away without saying good-bye to old friends, and presumption for having attempted to do so. Still, I am bound to speak. It is now three years since I first went before the footlights in Sunderland, and a year afterwards I was transplanted to Edinburgh. But I was a long time before I succeeded in giving you satisfaction. (Cries of 'No' and applause.) I was sometimes hissed in this theatre, and I can assure you that thousands of plaudits do not give half so much pleasure as one hiss gives pain, more especially to a young actor. But I am very glad to be able to think that I have won your esteem. (Applause.) I am also very grateful to the newspaper press for the encouragement they have given me, and also to the management for the many excellent and suitable parts into which I have been cast. In bidding you farewell in order to fulfil an engagement in a larger sphere in the metropolis, I trust it is not the last time I will have the pleasure of appearing before you. (Applause.) Ladies and gentlemen, I now bid you good-bye." At the end of his brief address, the actor was greeted with hearty cheers, and, with the plaudits of critical Edinburgh ringing in his ears, he set out for London. The enormous amount of experience which he obtained during his first three years on the stage—in reality, allowing for the summer vacations, only two and a half working years—may be imagined from the bare idea that he impersonated no less than four hundred and twenty-eight characters. When we take into consideration the care which he devoted to his work, this record is stupendous. It has no parallel in the history of great actors. Some thirty-two years afterwards—in November, 1891—when addressing the Students' Union Dramatic Society in Edinburgh, he said that he had once been a member of a university there—the old Theatre Royal. " There I studied for two years and a half my beautiful art, and there I learned the lesson which you will all learn that—

Deep the oak
Must sink in stubborn earth its roots obscure,
That hopes to lift its branches to the sky."



THE ENTR'ACTE,

EDINBURGH.—Mr. George Honey has been the attraction during the past week. Miss St. George concluded her engagement on Saturday evening. Mr. Irving has also left for the Princess', London. A contemporary thus speaks of this young actor:—"We have frequently adverted to the rapid progress Mr. Irving has achieved in his profession by unremitting zeal and study, but on the occasion of his benefit and last appearance, on Tuesday last, he excelled all his previous personations. Some may have deemed it somewhat ambitious that an actor, who has not been quite three years on the stage, should attempt the character of "Claude Melnotte," in *The Lady of Lyons*, but the finish with which Mr. Irving sustained the part, effectually proved that he had not over-estimated his powers. Thrice was he called in the course of the piece to receive the plaudits of an excellently and fashionably filled house. Mr. Irving took leave of his Edinburgh friends in a most modest speech, and retired amid their encouraging adieux." Miss Fanny Reeves and Mr. Eliot Galer make an appearance this evening.

SEPTEMBER 19, 1859.

Henry Irving

IRVING'S SIGNATURE IN 1859, AS IT APPEARS IN HIS SCRAP-BOOK, UNDER THE PRINTED EXTRACT ABOVE.

CHAPTER III.

1859-1863.

Irving's first appearance in London—His great disappointment—Succeeds in getting released from his engagement—Reads from "The Lady of Lyons" and "Virginius" at Crosby Hall—Favourable verdict of the London press—Replaces an old favourite in Dublin—Hissed and hooted at for three weeks—The sequel—Plays in Glasgow and Greenock—Macduff—Manchester—Adolphe, in "The Spy"—The amatory alchymist—His walk and elocution—Instructive criticisms in the Manchester papers—Makes a success as Mr. Dombey—Acts with Edwin Booth—His Claude Melnotte—The Titan Club—Thyrsites—Irving's first story—His remembrance of a kind deed.

Before coming to Henry Irving's first appearance in London—which took place in the same month as that in which he left Edinburgh—it is necessary to set right a mis-statement which was printed in a biography published in 1893, an error which has crept into other books about the actor. In March, 1859, so it was printed, "we find our actor at the old Surrey Theatre, playing under Mr. Shepherd and Mr. Creswick, for 'a grand week of Shakespeare, and first-class pieces,'" the part of Siward being attributed by the writer of the biography to Irving. These statements are easily disproved by certain facts which are incontrovertible. In 1883, Henry Irving gave me the details of his early career, and these details included the date of his first appearance in London; in 1903, he read the proof of a biographical sketch which was orginally intended for inclusion in the history of the Lyceum Theatre, but which, in view of the present biography, it was subsequently decided to omit. Again, the only characters which he acted in "Macbeth"—until he played the Thane at the Lyceum—were Layton, Rosse, Banquo, and Macduff. "Lastly, and to conclude," as Dogberry says, he was fairly busy in Edinburgh at the time, for in the particular month mentioned he studied and played the following important parts: Coitier in "Louis XI.," the King in "Hamlet," Rashleigh Osbaldistone in "Rob Roy," and Malcolm Graeme in "The Lady of the Lake," in addition to King Henry IV. in "Richard III." and Jasper Drysdale in "Mary Queen of Scots". In view of these important facts, it is impossible to understand how the mistake in question could have arisen. But there is no reason why it should be perpetuated.

We have seen that Henry Irving took his farewell of Edinburgh on 13th September, 1859. On the 24th of that month, having accepted an engagement at the Princess's Theatre, from Augustus Harris, the father of Augustus Harris—the celebrated producer of autumn drama and pantomime at Drury Lane—he was now seen for the first time on the London stage. The play in which he appeared was "Ivy Hall," an adaptation by John Oxenford, the dramatic critic of the *Times*, of "Le Roman d'un Jeune Homme Pauvre". Much to his amazement and discomfiture, he found that he had only half a dozen lines to speak at the commencement of the four-act drama. Very wisely, and with that grim determination which was so conspicuous a part of his character, he insisted on being released from the engagement. In vain did the manager endeavour to make him change his mind. The young actor gained the day, he was released from his three years' contract, and he resolved not to accept another engagement in London until he could see his way to doing himself justice. While still at the Princess's he had to undertake a task which must have been very uncongenial to the Horatio and Claudius of Edinburgh—he was called upon to act Osric to the Hamlet of an actor of no importance.

His personal friends in London had been somewhat mortified by the treatment meted out to him at the Princess's. He therefore gave two readings, at Crosby Hall, by way of showing that he was justified in his ambition as an actor and in proof of the benefit of his experience in Edinburgh. On 19th December, he read "The Lady of Lyons," and, on

8th February, 1860, "Virginius". It is interesting, after the lapse of almost half a century, to read some of the criticisms which were given on these readings. That of "The Lady of Lyons," according to the *Daily Telegraph* "was characterised by considerable ability, and showed a correct appreciation of the several characters and of the spirit of the dramatist. Mr. Irving possesses a good voice, and combines with it dramatic power of no mean order; and, judging from his performance on this occasion, he is likely to make a name for himself in the profession of his choice." The *Standard* remarked that his delineations of the various characters were admirably graphic and were rewarded with frequent bursts of applause. "If Mr. Irving's reading on the stage," it proceeded, "is as effective as it was in Crosby Hall, we may predict for him a brilliant and a deserved success, for his conception is good, his delivery is clear and effective, and there is a gentlemanly ease and grace in his manner which is exceedingly pleasing to an audience. Towards the end of the performance, the audience became deeply affected, and, from some parts of the hall, sobs were distinctly audible. At the close, an enthusiastic burst of applause rewarded him as he retired, and was continued until he again made his appearance on the platform and acknowledged the compliment." Another leading paper, after commenting on the mediocrity and tediousness of the average reader, admitted a most agreeable disappointment. Instead of finding the usual conventionality, "we were gratified by hearing the poetical 'Lady of Lyons' poetically read by a most accomplished elocutionist, who gave us not only words, but that finer indefinite something which proves, incontestably and instantaneously, that the fire of genius is present in the artist." This was high praise indeed, but it was justified by attainments in the future. The reading of "Virginius" called forth similar encouragement. It enabled the actor to display his versatility, for there could hardly be a greater contrast than the flowing language of Bulwer Lytton, and the rough, strong tragedy of Sheridan Knowles. Here, again, the reader's transitions from one character to another were singularly felicitous. His delineation, indeed, of each and every character proved him to be "an artist who has not mistaken his vocation, but who has the intelligence and ability to grapple with the refinements of his profession and overcome every difficulty that stands in the way of success". Some dozen other notices, all in the same pleasing strain, were printed about these readings at Crosby Hall—one of the most interesting episodes in the history of this ancient building, but one that, curiously enough, was omitted from the official chronicle of Crosby Hall prior to its proposed demolition last year. It was well that the young actor had not failed. For he was now about to undergo one of the most severe trials that can befall any actor, young or old.

The readings at Crosby Hall had attracted the attention of Henry Webb, the manager of the old Queen's Theatre, Dublin, who, having had to dismiss his "juvenile lead," an actor named George Vincent, made the unsuspecting Irving an offer of a four weeks' engagement. This offer was accepted, and the player, who had celebrated his twenty-second birthday four weeks previously, made his first appearance in Dublin on 5th March, 1860, as Cassio to the Othello of T. C. King, an actor who was popular in his day, particularly in Dublin. Henry Irving, however, had not calculated on the loyalty of a Dublin audience to an old favourite. And he certainly had not understood the situation, or he would not have risked the excellent reputation which he had won by his three years of hard work. "Is that the omadhaun, Mike?" asked one gallery boy from another when Cassio spoke his first lines. "No," was the instant reply, "them's the young man's clothes—they'll shove him out later on." He was greeted with a storm of hisses whenever he came on the stage. This was bad, but worse was to follow three nights later. On 8th March, Gerald Griffin's tragedy, "Gisippus," which had been produced on 23rd February, was played for the eleventh time, with Irving as Titus Quintus, the character originally taken by the dismissed actor, Vincent. This was adding insult to injury with a vengeance. In after years, he recalled the experience: "There was I standing aghast, ignorant of having given any cause of offence, and in front of me a raging, Irish audience, shouting, gesticulating, swearing volubly, and in various forms indicating their disapproval of my appearance. Nor was it a matter of mere temporary disturbance. Night after night, I had to fight through my part in the teeth of a house whose entire energies seemed to be concentrated in a personal antipathy to myself. A roughish experience that—to have to hold your own amid a continual uproar." So that, still to use his own words, he "went through the ordeal of facing for three weeks the howling and hooting of as merry, reckless and impulsive an audience as were ever gathered together. At last, the indignant manager protested, soundly rated and rebuked 'the boys,' who, on discovering the injustice they had done the young actor, as warmly encouraged and applauded him for one week, as they had before damned him unmercifully for three."

Other measures were taken on behalf of order and decency, in addition to the managerial appeal. So uproarious were the scenes on occasion, that two policemen were always employed to keep some little check on the galleryites. The treasurer of the theatre, whose benefit was approaching, waited on the superintendent of police, and spoke of the recent rowdiness. "The amiable chief swore he would soon settle that, and kept his word by drafting an extra force of police into the house, with instructions to eject all and sundry who were too demonstrative in their disapproval. A single night of stern treatment gave the conspiracy its quietus, and, during the last week of his engagement, Irving not only was freed from trouble, but received the applause that was his due."[1] During this lively Dublin engagement, Irving played, among a variety of parts, Laertes in "Hamlet," Florizel in "The Winter's Tale," Frank Friskly in "Boots at the Swan," and Didier in "The Courier of Lyons". With his acting of the last-named part on 31st March, he bade good-bye to the

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[1] W. J. Lawrence, in the *Dublin Evening Mail*, 21st May, 1907.

Queen's Theatre, Dublin. He made an excellent impression as Laertes, which was pronounced "a clever and judicious performance". On 7th April, he joined the company at the Theatre Royal, Glasgow. He remained in this position for five months. In Glasgow, and in Greenock, he continued in the work which fell to the provincial player of that period. His most notable performance here was Macduff. During his Glasgow engagement, he returned to Edinburgh, for one night only—Saturday, 12th May—the occasion being the benefit of his friend Edward Saker. The advertisement of this event gave him three lines to himself, it evidently being thought that he was worthy of considerable publicity; he played Captain Popham in a popular farce, "The Eton Boy".

He made many friends during his first visit to Glasgow, especially among the newspaper men, one of whom, Mr. W. Hodgson, writing in the *Fifeshire Journal* many years ago, recalled a most interesting scene: "It is midnight in the supper-room of a hotel in Wilson Street, Glasgow. Around the table are frequently a din of friendly voices and the laughter of healthy natures. They are those of newspaper people with work yet to do and of actors with work just done. They have come hither for the indispensable professional meal under the auspices of club life. Beside me sits a young man with long, glossy black hair, liquid eyes of subdued fire, and a great richness of features, which, you observe, are in profound repose. We two are the youngest people in the group; and our pleasure it is as the evenings suit to listen quietly, and add our timid approbations, to the witty repartee as it flashes along, or to the drollery that is tossed about. We have so intimately cottoned together as to know that this same young man has no disposition to talk except in the monosyllable, and in the brief but genial remark when it is challenged. He has cut no figure at all on the stage in Dunlop Street: an Italian prince in the melodrama of the 'Taking of Lucknow; or Dinna ye Hear It?' has been the great achievement in the barbaric pearl and gold of the Dunlop Street properties. On the boards there, as in this cosy supper room, in which there are men of made reputations (Toole, for instance), he is modestly pleased to take the withdrawal seat beside me. As is habitual with mortals who are constantly having their destinies wrought out for them, their own share subdued in that decree, the severance comes. This unobtrusive, strikingly-figured young man goes away south with an indomitable purpose in his soul that he had never revealed in all our confidences. Our parting was without ceremony. It was without knowledge; for the notice to sever came suddenly, and amid pre-occupations, I rather think, on my side. It was well it was so, for we were deeply attached; and Providence, I have often thought, is kindest when not consulting us that there shall be any ceremonious farewell. Six years ago in Dundee I reshook that young man's hand; no longer young, its owner no longer unknown; no longer having raveny hair; no longer in the back seat, but now the hand of the renowned Henry Irving! There was change, indeed; but not in heart, nor in manner, nor in the winning smile. Much had occurred in the interval to both of us; but nothing to turn either his head or heart from the companion in Glasgow when all the world was before the two, and the odds tremendous against the one."

During the first half of this year, and for long afterwards, the memory of the good position which he had, by slow degrees, attained in Edinburgh, backed up by the favourable verdict of London on his readings at Crosby Hall, helped to sustain him through many trials. His experience at the Princess's Theatre was disheartening enough in all conscience, but to be admonished for three weeks just because he had been selected to fill the place of another player, who had been dismissed from the theatre, was a poor recompense for laborious work. Glasgow and Greenock did not tend to improve matters, for, with but the one exception of Macduff, good parts did not fall to his lot. Moreover, the slender capital with which he had embarked on his career had been invested, as we have seen, in theatrical "properties," and there was not much to be saved out of his salary in Edinburgh of thirty shillings a week. And, when he left that city, it was with flying colours and with high hopes, for he was coming to London with a three years' engagement in his pocket. With Manchester, the case was different, for it was entirely a matter of speculation.

The story is best told in his own words. Speaking twenty-seven years afterwards—at a banquet given in his honour at the Manchester Arts Club, on 30th July, 1887—he related this early adventure: "I came all the way from Greenock to Manchester with a few shillings in my pocket, and I was accompanied by Miss Henrietta Hodson, now Mrs. Henry Labouchere. We had the good fortune to be engaged by a dear old friend of mine, Thomas Chambers. Somehow, he picked us out and offered us an engagement." This engagement was for the Theatre Royal, which was controlled by John Knowles, a dramatic enthusiast and wealthy man, whose manager was Charles Calvert. Irving's opening part in Manchester was a small one—that of Adolphe, a soldier, in a favourite little adaptation called "The Spy, or a Government Appointment," the date of his first appearance here being 29th September, 1860. The bill concluded with the National Anthem, in the singing of which he also joined. "So you see, gentlemen," he continued in his Manchester speech of 1887, "that as a vocalist I even then had some proficiency, although I had not achieved the distinction subsequently attained by my efforts in Mephistopheles. Well, gentlemen, you will admit that the little piece from the French and the one-act farce—'God save the Queen' was left out after the first night, through no fault of mine, I assure you— you will admit that these two pieces did not make up a very sensational bill of fare. I cannot conscientiously say that they crammed the theatre for a fortnight. But what did that matter? We were at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, perhaps the finest theatre in the kingdom, the manager was a man of substance, and we were all very happy and comfortable. By playing as much music as possible between the acts, we managed to eke out the performance until half-past nine. We could get to bed early, if we chose, for Manchester people, we were told, were early people—but remember, gentlemen, I am speaking of twenty-seven years ago. The next bill of fare at the Theatre Royal was 'Faust and Marguerite,' which had been produced very successfully a season or two before. This was Charles Kean's version of a French melodrama, from which Gounod took his libretto of 'Faust'. It was in three acts, and had four scenes; and I remember Dr. Faust being transported at the end of the play to the bottom of a well amidst sulphurous and tormenting flames, which was a deserving recompense for the performance." Other people shared this opinion of Irving's about the performance of "Faust," as may be judged from the following criticism: "Mr. H. Irving was rather too tall to permit of his successfully realising the popular idea of a learned doctor, and there was not the least of an alchymist—which we certainly think there ought to have been—about his appearance. He offered a very truthful picture of a 'spooney' youth who was ready to die, and something more, for the object of his passion, but the portrait failed to recall the original: and the consequence was, that when he went 'below,' much more of our pit followed him than the author intended he should receive." This "criticism" is a little bewildering, for it sets up a curious standard in regard to the stature of "learned doctors". As for the "alchymist," a little information as to what should precisely go to the appearance of such an individual would, no doubt, have been welcomed by the actor.

"The labour we delight in physics pain," and Henry Irving had to labour unceasingly before he made his mark in Manchester. During his first season here, he appeared in some thirty different characters. On three nights running, no less than seven new parts were acted by him. Yet he was hardly noticed by the press. We have to go from 27th November, 1860—when the *Examiner* observed that, although young, he had "material to make an actor"—to 13th May, 1861, for any allusion to him in the Manchester papers. On that date, the same paper, in commenting on a representation of a play called "Jacob's Truck," said: "There is a word or two due to Mr. Irving for his clever impersonation of Slipton Stacher. This young actor possesses many good qualities—Nature has done much for him, and requires a grateful return. But he is acquiring habits that will ultimately interfere with legitimate progress. Why should he be ambitious to imitate the automaton rather than a graceful and manly bearing? Nature's idea of a gentleman is not that of a modern 'swell,' with jerking walk and stiff neck and spasmodic elocution. Mr. Irving has a good presence, an intellectual-looking head and eye, a fine sonorous voice, and no slight amount of intelligence. He will be an actor if he has resolution to let Nature have more of her own way." This genuine criticism is instructive, for it shows that those faults in his style—which he was afterwards accused of having cultivated and exaggerated for the sake of notoriety—were strongly marked at the outset of his career. His peculiar walk had already been criticised adversely in Edinburgh in 1859. The defect seems to have grown with years. But the Manchester critic was wrong in one respect. If the jerking walk and spasmodic elocution were not in accordance with Nature herself, they were inherent to the man. He did his best to overcome these defects, and, if he did not entirely succeed in so doing, he made them so subservient to himself, and to his great qualities, that, in the end, they did not matter. The most curious allusion in this criticism is perhaps that to the "fine sonorous voice". If Irving's voice ever was really sonorous, many years of unceasing toil, and early privations, must have robbed it of that quality. He could make it carry, even to the day of his death, to the remotest recesses of the theatre, but it is impossible for those who saw him in the zenith of his career to think of it as sonorous.

That he strove to profit by the *Examiner's* criticism is proved by the next notice from that paper. This occurred, on 9th June, in connection with the first production in Manchester of John Brougham's comedy, "Playing with Fire".

The piece is based upon a series of misconceptions, and Irving had to help, in the part of a young married man, in the general excitement. "Mr. Irving gave us less of his peculiar mannerisms, to which we need not further allude," said the *Examiner*, "and showed in many points that he had studied the play, as well as the character of Herbert Waverley." It will be seen, from this observant criticism, that he had, thus early, become noted for a characteristic trait which never left him—a thorough knowledge of the piece in which he was acting, in addition to the mastery of his own part.

Even at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, there was a good deal of acting of the old "penny plain, twopence coloured" order. This was not the fault either of the theatre or of Manchester. But the members of the stock company had to support the various theatrical luminaries who then peregrinated the provinces. Some of these players were given to shouting themselves hoarse and thereby splitting the ears of the groundlings with their fearsome noise. Irving had seen much of this robustious kind of acting in Edinburgh, but he was too young to venture out on a line of his own. Happily, however, he had in Manchester a mentor who was artistic as a manager and natural as an actor—Charles Calvert, to whom he often acknowledged his indebtedness. When he was noticed again by the *Examiner*, there was no reference at all to his mannerisms, but, with the leading members of the company, he was praised for his avoidance of the faults of the old school. This was on 17th September, in reference to a mediocre domestic drama called "The Family Secret". The acting of the piece saved it from failure, "and in this respect," said the paper in question, "we have not often seen actors deserving of more honourable mention. Mr. C. Calvert, Mr. Irving, and Miss Annie Ness were each and all true to nature, and, consequently, won the respect of the judiciously critical, who, in these days, when our leading actors are 'tearing passion to tatters, to very rags,' see too little of what is genuine in art." This first year in Manchester must have been sadly disheartening to the young actor; but the recognition which he won for himself from the press at the end of the twelve months had its effect on the management inasmuch as he was allotted much better parts for the second season. Furlong in "Handy Andy" on 24th September, and Travers in "The Irish Emigrant" on 30th September, paved the way for an impersonation which brought him considerable, and favourable, comment. This was Mr. Dombey in John Brougham's version of "Dombey and Son," in which the American comedian, W. J. Florence, and Mrs. Florence, appeared as Captain Cuttle and Susan Nipper. The cold and stately Mr. Dombey was not the character usually associated with Irving, yet—at the age of twenty-three, be it borne in mind—he succeeded, despite the presence of "stars" of some magnitude in the cast, in making his rendering stand out. He was "very life-like," said the critical *Examiner*, and, according to the *Guardian*, he "showed an excellent appreciation of the character". A third play by John Brougham helped Irving to further success. This was a three-act comedy, called "Flies in the Web," which the comedian produced for his benefit early in December. He played the principal male character, and Mrs. Calvert appeared as a young orphan, a créole, who was handsome and accomplished, and wealthy as well. She was not, however, exactly a paragon of perfection, for she was imperious, impulsive, passionate, and tyrannical—a rather curious mixture. Irving played Paul Weldon, the possessor of a solitary shilling, "a young man who finds it hard work, without special industrial qualifications, to gain an honest livelihood". As those were old-fashioned days, it is almost needless to say that the impecunious young man eventually married the beautiful heiress. What must have been much more gratifying to the hero of this story was the *Examiner's* pronouncement that "Mr. Irving, we are glad to say, excelled, in our opinion, any of his previous efforts". Another impersonation which won him enhanced reputation was that of Sir Herbert Denzil in "A Word in Your Ear".

Various Shakespearean characters were acted by him during the season of 1861-62. The majority of these parts were played during October, when Edwin Booth visited Manchester: Laertes in "Hamlet," Cassio in "Othello," Benvolio in "Romeo and Juliet," Malcolm in "Macbeth," Philip in "King John," Orlando in "As You Like It," and Banquo in "Macbeth". But he was eclipsed by the "stars" of the time, and it was not until he acted Cornelius Nepos, in a little play, written by W. S. Hyde, called "The Dead Letter," that he was again deemed worthy of extended notice. The criticism in the *Examiner* is notable, for it touched upon the actor's individuality: "There are occasions when Mr. Irving indicates much intelligence along with a truthful perception of character, and he has not often been more fortunate in this respect than on Thursday evening. Certain portions of what he had to do exhibited genuine acting, the true embodiment of individuality." The same paper had more discriminate praise for him a month later. On 4th April, Irving played Claude Melnotte—a favourite part with him in his younger days—for the benefit of another member of the company. "This young actor has shown on several occasions during the season talent which may ere long ripen into first-class acting," the *Examiner* remarked prophetically. "Mr. Irving's Claude Melnotte, though one might have considered the part beyond his powers, deserved the applause so liberally bestowed upon him. He delivered many passages with fine feeling, and, we have little doubt, surprised many present who have only seen him in characters of less importance."

Despite the advancement which the young actor had made in his art, progress in any other direction was painfully slow. The year 1862 was a tedious one for him, for he had little money and his work was not of an interesting nature. As he had already gone through much of the drudgery of the stage, he must have found it "weary, stale, flat and unprofitable". The following year was hardly less dispiriting, and it was seldom that the critic of the *Examiner* had the opportunity of noticing him. He had no part in "Our American Cousin," in which E. A. Sothern acted in Manchester in April, 1863, but he supported him in "My Aunt's Advice," and "confirmed an established good opinion, showing that earnest, careful, and intelligent study of character which must eventually place him in a first-class position". Apart from his work in Manchester, he was never idle. His summer vacations were spent in readings at different places. For instance, at the Ball Room, Buxton, on 8th August, 1863, "Mr. Henry Irving, of the Theatres Royal, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Manchester," had "the honour to announce" a dramatic reading of "The Lady of Lyons". He printed a circular for the occasion giving extracts from the notices which he had received at Crosby Hall in 1859. The reserved seats were two shillings each, and the others one shilling, and sixpence. Much courage and inflexible determination were required in these trying years. But Henry Irving was not of common mould, and he never faltered in his high ambition. His provincial probation was not yet ended, nor was there any prospect of London in sight.

It may be imagined that there was little opportunity for social gatherings among the members of the company, but still there were moments of relaxation from the strict routine and occasional hours of jollity after the night's work was done. The Titan Club afforded the actors much relief from their labours. This social institution owed its origin to the members of the Theatre Royal company, and was founded in the autumn of 1859. It was, according to its rules, "a literary club of a convivial character," and it proved a boon and a blessing to its members, and, as actors and authors who were visiting the town were admitted to the select circle, it fostered a friendly feeling all round. It existed from October, 1859, until early in 1864. The members were so poor that they could not afford a club-house of their own, and they met at an adjacent tavern, the Printers' Arms. Each member was designated by a Shakespearean name, and "any brother addressing another except by his cognomen" was mulcted in the sum of one penny. The first president of the club was Thomas Chambers, the treasurer of the Theatre Royal, who was called Prospero; Charles Calvert, named Hamlet, was the first vice-chairman; and the first secretary and treasurer was Wybert Reeve. Henry Irving was admitted to the Titans a few nights after his first appearance at the Theatre Royal. On 16th October, 1860, he was duly introduced, and, as Thyrsites, enrolled a member. Why he should have selected—if, indeed, he had any choice in the matter—the "deformed and scurrilous" Grecian of "Troilus and Cressida" as his cognomen, is a mystery. Nor is it a matter of moment. It is of some interest, however, to know that, in December, 1862, "Thyrsites," in preference to being fined half a crown—for cash was extremely scarce—delivered a "True Ghost Story" to his fellow members. The story is remarkably well written, interesting throughout, and quite dramatic. It is too long for quotation, but the opening sentence may be given: "Brother Titans," he began, "having from my earliest remembrances possessed a reverence for good, jolly, hearty Saint Christmas, and all his good, jolly, hearty customs, and having also an aversion to throw away recklessly the sum of two shillings and sixpence, I have endeavoured faintly to combine homage to the fine old roysterer aforesaid with respect to my conscience, pocket, and the Titan Club; and accordingly have done my best to string together the fragments of an anecdote I once heard".[1] Irving spoke with more truth than might have appeared on the surface in regard to the forfeiture of half a crown, for, out of his salary of three pounds, he religiously sent his father thirty shillings each week, and, in order to do this, he was obliged to pay frequent visits to a pawnbroker's shop.

Among the members of the Titan Club was Joseph Robins, whose cognomen was Dogberry, an actor whose kindness Irving ever remembered with gratitude. For he told of the pathetic incident on more than one occasion, even so recently as on the eve of his departure for his last tour in America, when, being asked for some Christmas memories, his mind went back to these times of semi-starvation and to the good-hearted actor whose act of kindness never faded from his recollection: "I always like to call to mind the story of a poor and unknown actor—a story that I may have told before, and make no apology for telling again, because it illustrates the brotherhood of Christmas by one of those experiences that no man should forget. This poor actor went to dine one Christmas Day at the house of a comrade who was far from affluent except in native kindliness. That invitation was a godsend to the guest, who had no other prospects of a satisfying meal, or even of a generous fireside. He found the temperature just then most undesirably keen, for somehow his salary had left no margin for winter garments. He shivered on the journey to his friend's house, and he shivered when he went in, though he made believe heroically to have stirred up his circulation with an invigorating walk. His host gazed at him, fidgetted a little, and seemed unaccountably absent—'dried up,' as we actors say—in the most elementary conversation. Then he looked at his watch, and said: 'Nearly dinner-time, by Jove; you'd like to go upstairs and have a wash,' and led the way to the bedroom. Hanging over a chair was a suit of underclothes, most uncommonly warm-looking underclothes, of quite an attractive tint; and the host glanced hastily at them, and looked as if trying to avoid them. Then he made for the door, went out, put his head in again, and exclaimed, as if by a sudden and rather violent inspiration: 'Those clothes on the chair, old man—upon my word, I think you'd better put 'em on. It's deuced cold for the time of year, you know.' The good fellow choked on the last word, and shut the door quickly, and the poor actor sat down on the chair, and burst into tears. One of these two has been dead these many years; he is not forgotten. That gift, which he could ill afford, still warms the heart of his old friend, who thinks, moreover, that the story is good to tell at any time, but especially at Christmas time. Don't you agree with him?"

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[1] These particulars are taken from the "History and Proceedings of the Manchester Titan Club," edited by Alfred Darbyshire, F.S.A., and related by him in the *Manchester Herald*, 1899-1900.

CHAPTER IV.

1864-1865.

Still in Manchester—Mercutio—Hamlet after Sir Thomas Lawrence—Hamlet in real earnest—Criticisms on the performance — Joseph, in "Deborah"—Hamlet again, Bob Brierley, the Lancashire lad—At Oxford—An encouraging criticism—His reminiscences of Manchester—Playing before the pantomime—His Robert Macaire—Exposes the Davenport Brothers—His amusing speech and great success—Leaves the Theatre Royal—At the Prince's Theatre—Claudio, Edmund, and the Duc de Nemours—More reminiscences of Manchester—His tribute to Charles Calvert.

If his fortunes did not change considerably for the better during the two succeeding years, he at least broke through some of his fetters and proved to the Manchester public that he was a man of mettle. Early in 1864, too, he had made a hit in the production of "The Colleen Bawn." In addition to the author, Dion Boucicault, and his wife, there was a company of actors who were generally esteemed by local playgoers. But the hot-headed actor-author spoke harshly of them all—with one exception. Oddly enough, considering that in after years Boucicault was one of the various "discoverers" of Irving—who, as this story will presently show, discovered himself—he averred that the stock company of the Theatre Royal contained only one actor—not Henry Irving—who was worthy of praise. For all that, the Hardress Cregan of Henry Irving was much liked, and is spoken of in terms of praise to this day by old Manchester playgoers. Mercutio, in "Romeo and Juliet," brought him additional notice of an acceptable kind, and then, in April, the celebration of Shakespeare's birthday enabled him to distinguish himself in a remarkable manner. The tercentenary of the dramatist's natal day was honoured in Manchester by some readings from Shakespeare by Charles Calvert and some tableaux vivants. Mrs. Calvert posed as Lady Macbeth, and Irving was selected for Hamlet. Thanks to his own dark hair and personal appearance, he was enabled to give a remarkable representation of John Philip Kemble as he is represented in the famous painting by Sir Thomas Lawrence. It is interesting to think of him standing thus, attired in the black cloak and the hat with the enormous funereal plumes, skull in hand, on the stage of the Manchester Theatre Royal on the afternoon of Saturday, 23rd April, 1864. Ten and a half years later, he appeared as Hamlet at the Lyceum and rose to the foremost place in his profession.

Even now he was thinking most seriously of the character, and, two months after his striking realisation of the Lawrence picture, he acted Hamlet in Manchester. Prior to this event, however, he had merited—and received—much praise for his performance in a new domestic drama called "Ye Merchant's Storye"—an adaptation from the French—and in a dramatic version of Miss Braddon's novel, "Aurora Floyd". Monday, 20th June, was fixed for his benefit—his first in Manchester—and he selected "Hamlet" for the occasion. He had the loyal help of Mr. Calvert as the Ghost and of Mrs. Calvert as Ophelia. Mrs. Calvert also supplemented the tragedy by acting in a burlesque on "Medea" in which, a few nights earlier, she had made a great success. The pit and galleries were crowded, and "the boxes contained a good muster of Mr. Irving's admirers". The young actor received some kindly criticism on his early—he was but twenty-six years old—impersonation of the Prince of Denmark. The criticisms are all the more interesting to look back upon, for they were not mere gush. It is evident that the writers intended to be helpful. The three most important notices appeared in the *Examiner*, *Guardian*, and *Courier*. The first-named journal said: "Mr. Henry Irving took his benefit last night, and drew around him a large number of friends, so numerous indeed as to present to him an assurance of the respect in which he is held in Manchester. Selecting

Hamlet, he took upon himself the arduous task of interpreting Shakespeare in one of his wonderful creations. The attempt was a bold one, but far from being a failure. In the more impassioned passages Mr. Irving wanted power, more from physical, however, than mental deficiency. Where the plaintive predominated—the noted soliloquy 'to be or not to be' for instance—again in the advice to the players and the other colloquial passages, there was much for commendation—nor should we omit in this estimate the beautiful lines commencing 'What a piece of work is man,' the poetry of which was finely appreciated by the actor. On the whole, it was a performance which exhibited very considerable intelligence, and conscientious study, and well deserved the warm applause with which it was greeted." The *Guardian* was not quite so liberal in its praise : "When a man aims high, it does not always happen that he strikes high. We credit him with the intention, and record regretfully that his achievement does not equal it. In the whole range of the dramatic art there is no character that requires loftier and more varied accomplishments for its efficient presentation than that of Hamlet, which was assumed last night by Mr. Henry Irving on the occasion of his benefit ; and to say that his personation was not such a success as one would wish for an intelligent and studious man, is simply to add his name to a long list of worthy actors who have done well in other histrionic spheres, if they have not shone in the highest. A more robust physique than Mr. Irving has is wanted to make a Prince of Denmark, and consequently his voice was unequal to the demands which Hamlet makes upon it. This is a failing which no art can supply. But study can give a greater command over the vocal tones than Mr. Irving displayed ; and by more variety in the intonation and greater clearness, the deficiency in power may be, as it were, hidden, if not compensated. Judging by the applause of a full house, our estimate of the hero's part was not endorsed by the public. Perhaps Mr. Irving was somewhat unnerved at the outset by the earnestness of the welcome that greeted him. He was called before the curtain after every act."

Here, it is to be noted, was complaint of his lack of physique and deficiency of voice. The latter was no longer "sonorous," and it is doubtful if it ever possessed that quality. The *Courier*, although critical, found much to commend: "Nothing could be more encouraging than the reception given to Mr. Henry Irving last night, when for the first time he stepped on the stage in the rôle of Hamlet; and, throughout the night, a generous sympathy with commendable emulation was evinced by a well-filled house, disposed to be considerate as well as critical. Having, perhaps, unnerved Mr. Irving by an early display of good feeling, it sought to reassure him by calling him before the curtain at the close of each act. The house knew well Mr. Irving's ability in light drama, and scarcely expected an ideal Hamlet from him. It knew beforehand that Mr. Irving was unequal physically to the expression of the highest tragic power, and it therefore judged his efforts by the known strength of the actor, as well as by the comparative success which he attained. Substantially, it attested that, with a more powerful voice that would have accommodated the word to the action, Mr. Irving, by repetition, would suit the action to the word in the most critical speeches and scenes of the tragedy. He was best, and perhaps a little too off-hand and easy, in ordinary dialogue, and at times, much too hasty for the development of the plot. In the play scene, he was too impetuous in approaching the King, who ought to rise discomfited by the play, without having its meaning forcibly applied by Hamlet. At other times Mr. Irving found it difficult to avoid the gait and mien of comedy, or rather fell into it from long usage. Such things were to be expected, and they are not mentioned disparagingly. Mr. Irving's conception of the character, whilst capable of emendation by study, was generally good, and his readings, when within his vocal compass, were impressive and effective."

All this was well said, and, as the criticism was discriminating, it was of service. It is worthy of note that for this early impersonation he followed an innovation which had been made in regard to make-up by Charles Fechter, who, in March, 1861, when he played Hamlet at the Princess's, wore blonde hair. So, as the idea was thought well of at the time, Irving followed it, and adopted a fair wig for his first Hamlet. As is well-known, he used his own hair for the Lyceum Hamlet. A week after his first performance of Hamlet, he added to his local fame by a remarkable interpretation of the chief male character, Joseph, in a version of Mosenthal's drama, "Deborah," in which Miss Bateman—with whom he subsequently played at the Lyceum—had just made her mark at the Adelphi. The *Examiner* was moved into observing that it had "never seen Mr. Irving in a character that suited him so well, or in which he has done better. His make-up was elegant and prepossessing, and his acting that of the scholar and gentleman he was intended to represent." But he had not finished with Hamlet yet. His first performance was so highly appreciated by Manchester playgoers that he repeated his rendering on the Saturday night following, 25th June. More encouraging still, a third representation was given on Saturday, 9th July, the last night of the season at the Theatre Royal. In drawing attention to this event, the *Guardian* noted that the experience gained by the actor in the course of the second performance of this difficult character "has given Mr. Irving greater power, as it always does when availed of by so earnest a student as he is". These few words must have been consoling, and, indeed, there was much need of consolation. For the mortifications to which the young actor was subjected were by no means ended. Irving always spoke most affectionately of Manchester, but his experience there was long and trying. He had, however, the fortitude to endure it, and he justified his faith in himself.

During the closing of the Manchester theatre, certain members of the company played at the Theatre Royal, Oxford, and Irving won considerable popularity during this engagement. The opening programme had "The Ticket-of-Leave Man" as its principal attraction, with Irving as the hero, Bob Brierley, the Lancashire lad, a character which had been taken by Mr. Henry Neville in the original production of the drama at the Olympic Theatre on 27th May, 1863. Irving also acted Claude Melnotte, Hamlet, and Macduff at Oxford. He again wore long flaxen hair as the Prince of Denmark. He impressed the audience by the evidence of his deep study of the part and his intense earnestness. On returning to Manchester, he played Jim Dalton, the bold and expert thief of "The Ticket-of-Leave Man," in support of Mr. Neville as Bob Brierley, with such effect that he was rewarded with praise on all sides. Another success was made by him in the production of a three-act drama, by Watts Phillips, called "Camilla's Husband". He played the chief part, Maurice Warner, a poor, abandoned, ambitious artist, who is married for money to a woman whom he binds himself to forget. The *Examiner* was greatly impressed by this impersonation, the more so as it discovered in the actor a quality which it had not previously discerned. "We have always credited Mr. Irving with many excellencies," it said, "but we will now add another to the list—that of genuine pathos. His conduct towards the woman who makes him her husband, is marked by a nice perception of the probabilities of human action in such a position: he shows passion where passion is needed, self-respect and manly dignity where the occasion demands. But there were flashes of feeling at times which could only be struck out by a gifted actor, and one who possessed a fine sense of the proprieties of expression and suggestion. Mr. Irving may have found his true sphere in such parts as Maurice Warner. If so, he has only to add the power of self-restraint in scenes where calmness, rather than violence tells, to reach distinction to which he has, perhaps, scarcely hoped to attain."

These kind words, evidently those of a thoughtful critic, appeared on 26th October. It is significant that the next notice in Irving's treasured volume is dated in January—

nearly three months later. This is accounted for by the change in management of the Theatre Royal. Several admirers of Charles Calvert, who had recognised his ability and earnestness as actor and producer, had induced him to leave the Royal and to take over the management of the newly-erected Prince's Theatre. He accordingly opened that house on 15th October, 1864, with "The Tempest". In the following year, he revived "Much Ado About Nothing" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and, in 1866, "Antony and Cleopatra". As Irving remained at the Theatre Royal, his business connection with Calvert ceased. But he always remembered the kindness of his old manager and of his wife. Soon after Irving became a member of the company at the Royal, Mr. and Mrs. Calvert often brought the young actor home to supper—a meal which was much needed. "Sometimes, when the fire in the small sitting-room had gone out, they all three adjourned to the kitchen, where the fire was still burning, and there, with their chairs in a little semi-circle and their feet on the fender, they discussed plays and playing till nearly daybreak. . . . Did he reveal, in his looks and his talk, the powers that, in years to come, were to sway men so forcibly? Mrs. Calvert says he did not—that he was just a pleasant, intellectual young man, with no special suggestion of power."[1] Irving was for four years under the guidance of Calvert. He never forgot his old friend and manager. In the year 1881, when he was on tour in the provinces, he was entertained at a public banquet in Manchester. Dr. A. W. Ward, who was in the chair, made a eulogistic speech in proposing the health of the actor. Irving alluded in felicitous terms to his association with, and gave some extremely interesting reminiscences of his early days in, Manchester. "I lived here for five years," he said, "and wherever I look—to the right or to the left, to the north or the south—I always find some remembrance, some memento of those five years—youthful aspirations, youthful hopes, battles fought, battles won, battles lost, early ambitions, and many things that fill my mind with pleasure and sometimes with pain. But there is one association connected with my life that probably is unknown to but a few in this room. That is an association with a friend, which had much to do, I believe, with the future course of our two lives. When I tell you that our communions were very grave and very deep, that our friendship was a strong one, and for months and years we fought together, and worked together to the best of our power, and with the means we had then, to give effect to the art we were practising; when I tell you we dreamt of what might be done, but was not done, and patted each other on the back and said, 'Well, old fellow, perhaps the day will come when you may have a little more than sixpence in your pocket;' when I tell you that that man was well-known to you, and that his name was Calvert, you will understand the nature of my associations with Manchester. Our lives were separated even while he lived, and our intercourse ceased altogether; he was working here and I was working elsewhere. I have no doubt you will be able to trace in my own career, and the success I have had, the benefit of the communion I had with him.

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[1] "Reminiscences and Anecdotes of Mrs. Charles Calvert," communicated by M. H. Walbrook, *Pall Mall Magazine*, September, 1907.

"When I was in Manchester I had very many friends. I needed good advice at that time, for I found it a very difficult thing as an actor to pursue my profession, and to do justice to certain things that I always had a deep, and perhaps rather an extravagant, idea of, on the sum of £75 a year. I have been making a calculation within the last few minutes of the amount of money that I did earn in those days, and I find it was about £75 a year. Perhaps one would be acting out of the fifty-two weeks of the year for some thirty-five. The other part of the year one would probably be receiving nothing. Then an actor would be tempted perhaps to take a benefit, by which he generally lost £20 or £30. Any friend of mine present who may have thought a little less of me at that time, perhaps because of my continuous state of impecuniosity, will forgive me when I confess the amount of my earnings. However, that time is past, but if there are any odd half-crowns that I owe I shall be glad to pay them. I have a very fond recollection, I have an affection for your city, for very many reasons. The training I received here, which Professor Ward has alluded to, was a severe training; I must say at first it was very severe. I found it a difficult thing to make my way at all with the audience; and I believe the audience, to a certain extent, was right; I think there was no reason that I should make my way with them. I don't think I had learnt enough; I think I was too raw, too unacceptable. But I am very proud to say that it was not long before, with the firmness of the Manchester friendship which I have always found, they got to like me; and I think before I parted with them they had an affection for me. At all events, I remember when in this city as little less—or little more—than a walking gentleman, I essayed the part of Hamlet, the Dane, I was looked upon as a sort of madman, who ought to be taken to a sort of asylum and shut up; but I found in acting it before the audience that their opinion was a very different one, and before the play was half gone through I was received with a fervour and a kindness which gave me hope and expectation that in the far and distant future I might perhaps be able to benefit by their kindness. Perhaps they thought that by encouraging me they might help me on in the future. I believe they thought that, I believe that was in the thoughts of many of the audience, for they received me with an enthusiasm and kindness which my merits did not deserve."

The change of management at the Theatre Royal resulted in Irving's withdrawal from that establishment ere long. His three performances of Hamlet, and his successes in other parts, notably, Hardress Cregan and Maurice Warner, had endeared him to a large section of Manchester playgoers. It was, therefore, all the more galling to find that he had nothing noteworthy to do from October, 1864, until the following January. And then he had to appear in a comedy, entitled "Where there's a Will there's a Way," which "played the people in" to the pantomime! Early in February, he was still in the same position. A drama called "The Dark Cloud," written by Arthur Sketchley, preceded the pantomime. He had to act the evil genius of the play, one Philip Austin. His personation of this bold, shameless ruffian was hailed as the most important, and most meritorious, part of the performance. Careful preparation and study were manifest throughout. And the *Examiner* was "happy in adding another testimony to his merits, and to that versatility of talent which increases with his years". He never lost heart of grace, but worked steadfastly in spite of every obstacle. His performance of Robert Macaire was his last character of any importance at the Theatre Royal in 1865. The play was given on Saturday, 18th February, before the pantomime. Here the natural refinement of his style was somewhat against him, and the *Examiner* did not hesitate to say so: "His 'make-up' is capital, and his assumption of gentlemanly ease and nonchalance very clever. There are, however, natural obstacles in the way of Mr. Irving's perfect realisation of the brave, bold ruffian of the genuine French stamp. Personal instincts of a refined and estimable kind do not easily give way in his effort to pourtray the fierce rascality which marks Macaire's treatment of his companion, and we observed a lack of the dash and vigour which constitute no unimportant items of the villain's nature. Coolness there was, and effrontery, but not of that devil-may-care sort necessary to throw out the prominent features of Macaire. Thus, the earlier portions of Mr. Irving's acting were most satisfactory, as requiring less energy and greater finish. From those strictures we except the death scene, in which he succeeded in producing a natural and impressive finale. We ought not to omit a hearty recognition of the tact displayed in the dance with the village girl; the fine gentleman in rags changing his one glove from one hand to the other as his partner changed sides, and maintaining his severe politeness to the very close, was quite a masterly piece of acting." And the *Guardian*, which hitherto had not been lavish in its praise, found something to say in his favour, despite the refinement which it was impossible for him to overcome entirely: "Mr. Irving has always shown that a close study, and conscientious care, have guided him in the elocution and action belonging to his part, whatever that has been. A certain refinement was so identified with him, that to find him assuming the villain was a surprise. Recently, he excited admiration by his jollity in a rollicking character, which yet did not sacrifice his gentlemanliness. Now he has made a considerable step ahead, in disclosing the versatility of his resources by enacting the part of Robert Macaire. Here his refinement is his greatest difficulty; but he has managed cleverly to conceal it, and his excellent disguise harmonises well with the nonchalant air of the wandering thief. His dance with the peasant girl is full of oddity." The *Courier* described in detail his rendering of the character, winding up with its "sanction to put this down as one of his most successful" impersonations.

Another opportunity for good acting came to him in April of this year. He had returned, for a brief engagement, to his old manager, Charles Calvert, who was then in the first flush of his Shakespearean success at the Prince's Theatre. But the reason for his leaving the Royal was forced upon him: it was not of his own inclining. Indeed, it was closely connected with the high ideal which he had already set himself to attain for the stage. Two tricksters, who called themselves the Davenport Brothers, had succeeded in gulling the susceptible people of England—or, at any rate, a large proportion of them—with so-called spiritualistic séances. In an unhappy moment for them, their agent had the audacity to offer a hundred pounds to any person who could perform their feats. This tempting bait appealed very strongly to a certain needy actor called Henry Irving, to a fellow player, Phillip Day, and to Frederick Maccabe, who subsequently became extremely popular as an entertainer. It is not recorded that the trio ever obtained the hard cash, but they had the satisfaction of completely annihilating as impudent a pair of charlatans as ever existed. On the afternoon of Saturday, 25th February, 1865, the Library Hall of the Manchester Athenæum was filled with some five hundred ladies and gentlemen in response to an invitation issued by the performers to a display of "preternatural philosophy," in a "private séance à la Davenport." The exposure was complete, and Irving obtained a vast amount of notoriety through his share in the unmasking of the adventurers. The daily papers devoted columns to the affair. Process for process, phenomena for phenomena, trick for trick, the new "brothers" rivalled their prototypes and amazed and delighted their audience. After some people of position had been chosen to superintend the binding of the "brothers," Irving stepped forward, and in a modest, gentlemanly address, stated the object of the meeting. He said that, in common with others of his friends, his attention had been called to the so-called manifestations of the notorious Davenports; that two gentlemen believed themselves capable of doing—under precisely similar conditions—all that the "brothers" did; that the entire affair was the result of skill, tact, and clever manipulation; and that the Davenports were no better than showmen. Having read several extracts from a pamphlet in which it was alleged that spiritualism had been part and parcel of the inheritance of the Davenports, he proceeded to introduce the new "brothers". In so doing, he made great capital by his burlesque of a certain Dr. Ferguson, who had taken part in the original séance. The rapid assumption of a wig and beard, a few adroit facial touches, a neckerchief of the approved sort, and a lightly-buttoned surtout, soon changed the actor into an admirable "double" of the renowned "doctor". The resemblance was so faithful that it was immediately greeted with applause and amusement. He addressed the audience with all the serious demeanour of the original, reproducing the exact tone, accent, expression, and gesture so accurately as to be "irresistible in their ludicrous likeness to nature". His speech was as follows:—

> "In introducing to your notice the remarkable phenomena which have attended the gentlemen who are not brothers—who are about to appear before you, I do not deem it necessary to offer any observations upon the extraordinary manifestations. I shall therefore at once commence a long rigmarole—for the purpose of distracting your attention, and filling your in-

telligent heads with perplexity. I need not tell this enlightened audience of the gigantic discoveries that have been made and are being made in the unfathomable abyss of science—I need not tell this enlightened audience (because if I did they wouldn't believe me)—(laughter)—I say I need not tell this enlightened audience that the manifestations they are about to witness are produced by an occult power (the meaning of which I don't clearly understand)—(laughter); but we simply bring before your notice facts, and from these facts you must form your own conclusions, (hear, hear, and renewed applause). Concerning the early life of these gentlemen, columns of the most uninteresting description could be written—(laughter). I will mention one or two interesting facts connected with these remarkable men, and for the truth of which I personally vouch. In early life one of them, to the perfect unconcern of everybody else, was instantly and most unconsciously floating about his peaceful dwelling in the arms of his amiable nurse—(laughter)—while, on the other occasions, he was frequently, with invisible hands, tied to his mother's apron strings—(renewed laughter). Peculiarities of a like nature were exhibited by his companion, whose acquaintance with various spirits commenced many years ago, and has increased to the present moment, with pleasure to himself and profit to others—(roars of laughter). These gentlemen have not been celebrated throughout the vast continent of America—they have not astonished the whole civilised world, but they have travelled in various parts of this glorious land—the land of Bacon—(laughter)—and are about to appear in a new phase in your glorious city of Manchester—(laughter). Many really sensible and intelligent individuals seem to think that the requirement of darkness seems to infer trickery—(laughter)—so it does—(cheers). But I will strive to convince you that it does not—(hear, hear). Is not the dark chamber necessary to the process of photography? and what would we reply to him who would say, 'I believe photography to be a humbug—do it in the light, and we will believe otherwise?' It is true, we know why darkness is essential to the production of the sun picture, and if scientific men will subject these phenomena to analysis, they will find why darkness is essential to our manifestations—(laughter)—but we don't want them to find—(laughter)—we want them to avoid a common-sense view of mystery—(laughter). We want them to be blinded by our puzzle, and to believe with implicit faith in the greatest humbug of the nineteenth century—(loud applause and laughter)."

The papers were eloquent in their praise of Irving's personation. The *Guardian* was moved to unwonted eulogy, "for the happiness of Mr. Irving's burlesque, the smartness of his art, and his readiness of repartee, went far to make the entertainment the most enjoyable that has been given in Manchester for a long time. Again and again, the room resounded with the heartiest laughter at Mr. Irving's humorous sallies, whose fun was heightened by the mock gravity with which they were delivered. Mr. Irving thus supplied a great intellectual gratification, which, combined with the skilful exposure of the Davenport humbug by his confrères, made one feel that it was a privilege to be one of the invited guests."

The entertainment aroused such excitement in Manchester that it was repeated a week later, this time in the Assembly Room of the Free Trade Hall. The doors were opened at half-past one o'clock, but, before that hour, the entrance was surrounded by an eager group of persons "of highly respectable and influential position in the City," waiting for admission. Irving again introduced the mock brothers, and made another humorous speech. And, once more, the leading papers gave a long account of the clever exposure. Irving had to pay the penalty of this success. For the management of the Theatre Royal tried to induce him to repeat the entertainment on the stage of their play-house. But he considered that such a programme was not in keeping with the dignity of a leading theatre. His refusal meant his severance with the Royal. He did not remain very long with Calvert at the Prince's, but he added Claudio in "Much Ado About Nothing," Edmund in "King Lear," and the Duc de Nemours in "Louis XI.," to his already long list of parts. The latter character brought him many congratulations. It is curious to think of Irving, who was now twenty-seven years of age, acting the hero of this melodrama in which, years afterwards, he made such a great hit as Louis XI. that the play remained in his répertoire from that time until the end of his career—from 1878 until 1905. The *Examiner* was able to speak of his impersonation of the bold Nemours in high terms: "it was careful, intelligent, well-studied throughout; the bedroom scene," where the avenger "checks his uplifted hand and spares the miserable monarch's life, was a masterly display of art". This performance closed the season, and, on the evening of 12th April, Irving took a temporary farewell of Manchester. As the occasion was announced as his benefit, it is satisfactory to know that the large room of the Free Trade Hall "never presented a more crowded and animated appearance". Irving was "received with vehement and prolonged cheering"—a proof that he had established himself in the favour of Manchester playgoers. He recited an address, which had been written for him by a local gentleman, Mr. Fox Turner, in which the Davenport phenomena were satirically alluded to, and then played Captain Charles in Dance's comedietta, "Who Speaks First?" Frederick Maccabe gave a selection from his entertainment, "Begone Dull Care," and a repetition of the Davenport exposure, with, of course, Irving as the "doctor," preceded "Raising the Wind," with Irving in his familiar character of Jeremy Diddler. An actress, whose recent success at the Haymarket Theatre will be fresh in the minds of many London theatre-goers, Miss Florence Haydon, played in the first item in the programme, and her sister, Miss Maud Haydon, acted in both plays. The prices of admission, judged by the present scale, were very moderate—one shilling for the body of the hall, double that sum for the gallery, and four shillings for the reserved seats.

In a speech at the Manchester Arts Club in 1887, Irving recalled these early years. They were years of struggle, and there was much bitterness in them. But it was characteristic of the man that there was no tinge of bitterness in his reflections. "Theatrical management in those days was not a very complicated business," he said, "there was no competition, no over-crowding, no one could say that the theatre was not well-ventilated; but, though the houses were dull, we were a merry family. Our wants were few; we were not extravagant. We had a good deal of exercise, and what we did not earn, we worked hard to borrow as frequently as possible from one another. Ah, gentlemen, they were very happy days. But do not think, gentlemen, that this was always our practice of an afternoon. There was plenty of admirable and good work done in the theatre. The public of Manchester was in those days a critical public, and could not long be satisfied with such meagre fare as I have pictured. During the five years of my sojourn in Manchester there was a succession of brilliant plays performed by first-rate actors, and I must say that I owe very much to the valuable experience which I gained in your Theatre Royal under the management of John Knowles. Whether we were all first-rate actors, I will not say. We thought so, and were happy in that belief. . . . When I first came to your city, art was not as potent as it is now. To feel how great a change has been wrought, and how far-reaching an influence has been exercised, one has only to walk through your art galleries. Stage art improved very much in Manchester under the influence of Charles Calvert, with his Shakespeare and other revivals. Calvert's was a worthy ambition which should hardly, I think, be left to purely private enterprise—certainly in a city like Manchester, with its art schools and encouragement." Irving's tribute to Calvert in this speech should be noted; also, his advocacy of a municipal theatre—a subject always dear to his heart.

CHAPTER V.

1865-1866.

Edinburgh again—Robert Macaire—A friendly criticism and a prophecy—Hamlet at Bury—Iago and Macduff at Oxford—Plays with Fechter in Birmingham—His poverty there—Liverpool, and the Isle of Man—Liverpool again—Amusing criticisms—A "sterling actor"—Praise from the *Porcupine*—His Robert Macaire favourably received—Supports J. L. Toole in the provinces—John Peerybingle—His reminiscences of Liverpool—Acts Rawdon Scudamore—Receives three offers from London in consequence—The Ghost, Bob Brierley, and Fouché—Leaves the north for London, having acted five hundred and eighty-eight parts during his apprenticeship to the stage.

At the time of his leaving Manchester, Irving was twenty-seven years of age. Eight and a half years had passed since he joined the theatrical profession, yet he had to endure the drudgery of the life of a strolling player for another eighteen months, ere he obtained a footing in London. These last months of his probation were extremely varied. From Manchester, he proceeded to Edinburgh where, at the Prince of Wales's Operetta House, he played Robert Macaire, and in "A Dark Cloud" and several light pieces. This was only a temporary theatre, better known as the Waterloo Rooms, and the appointments were not of the best, as may be imagined from the use in the French drama of "The Roadside Inn" of a bottle-basket labelled No. 5 Leith Street, Edinburgh. But the actor triumphed over these minor difficulties, and his Macaire was accorded a hearty welcome by his old friends. The *North Briton* was "glad to note the fact of Mr. Irving's improved style. He has now been long enough on the stage to find out and feel the force of our hints and criticisms of five years ago." Upon the occasion of his playing in "An Hour at Seville" (1858) "we predicted that he would become a useful and good actor, but now we can foresee that he will have a career!" This friendly paper lived long enough to see its prophecy fulfilled. From Edinburgh, Irving returned to Lancashire, and acted Hamlet on Friday, 23rd June, at the Athenæum, Bury. He was supported in the male parts—with the exception of that of the Ghost—by amateur actors of Bury and Manchester, the Polonius being Mr. Alfred Darbyshire, the well-known architect, who afterwards became one of his warmest personal friends. The Ophelia was Miss Florence Haydon. The Davenport entertainment was announced as a conclusion to the bill, but, as "Hamlet" did not terminate until half-past eleven o'clock, the farce, "My Wife's Dentist," was substituted, with Irving in the title rôle. "Hamlet" was repeated on the Saturday night. Irving's greatest hits appear to have been made in the soliloquy at the close of the meeting between Hamlet and the players—"O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!"—in the conclusion of the play scene, and, above all, in the closet scene, in which Hamlet's tenderness to his mother was very marked. A few weeks later, at Oxford, he acted Iago and Macduff, winning much commendation in both characters. Here, again, his tenderness when Macduff learns of the murder of his wife and children was much extolled. But it is curious to read that the audience was worked up to the highest pitch of enthusiasm in the last act of the tragedy in which Macbeth and Macduff are engaged in deadly combat, and "during that long and fierce struggle there was incessant cheering". These were the palmy days of the drama. From Oxford, he went to Birmingham, where he played from the beginning of September until November, at the Prince of Wales's Theatre. The local critics seem to have liked his Bob Brierley better than anything else, and, although they were not impressed by his Laertes, his acting of that character nevertheless was sufficiently impressive to induce Charles Fechter to make him a tempting offer to join his company at the Lyceum. But he was under an engagement from which he could not be released, and he was not destined to reach London until nearly a year later. These Birmingham experiences were extremely trying, as Irving recalled in 1897 when, in a speech made at the Clef Club, he referred to the poverty which, through no fault of his own, he had to endure.

He went from Birmingham to Liverpool where, at St. James's Hall, on the 13th of November, he opened in his old part of Philip Austin in "A Dark Cloud". But burlesque, followed by farce, was the staple bill of fare. Irving did not appear in the former, but he acted Captain Charles—another familiar part—in "Who Speaks First?"—and Captain Ormond in "Tom Noddy's Secret". A brief engagement in Douglas, Isle of Man, preceded a long season at the Prince of Wales's Theatre—a small house, now put to other uses, which was a gold-mine in its day—where, on the 11th of December, he acted Archibald Carlyle in a version of "East Lynne". Although there was a "star" actress in the cast, Irving received very prominent notice for his performance, and this despite the fact that the part was little more than a lay figure. But he managed to infuse it with life and interest. It was noted that he was careful, quiet, and gentlemanly in all his actions, and that, without sacrificing the true meaning of the character, he gave it an air of reality which, without his own personality, it would have lacked. Liverpool at this period possessed two critical weekly journals. Their nature was sufficiently indicated by their respective titles—the *Tomahawk* and the *Porcupine*. Although they differed in many graver issues, they were at one in their liking for the young actor. The first-named paper, however, was a little vitriolic on occasion. In criticising "Only a Clod," having drawn attention in parentheses to a somewhat perplexing statement—"Mr. Henry Irving makes his first appearance for the second time at this theatre"—it castigated him for his defects. Having set him down as "a sterling actor," it upbraided him for his disagreeable peculiarities, such as "licking his lips, wrinkling his forehead, and speaking through his nose". The first of this trio of mannerisms he retained to the end, especially when speaking in front of the curtain, but it is to his credit that he abolished the other two. On another occasion, the slashing critic of the *Tomahawk* opined that "he would meet with far greater success if he were more himself on every occasion and managed to leave off the drowsiness of voice which he patronises and the monotony of attitude into which he now and then falls". It had much to say in his praise on this and other occasions. It was particularly favourable to his Philip Austin in "A Dark Cloud" which it described as "a remarkable piece of character acting, betraying in nearly all cases a surprising amount of study from life. Not alone was this noticeable in the nasal voice and effective, unexaggerated make-up, but most especially in the actions accompanying passages which quite warranted, but did not suggest, the filling-up accorded them by Mr. Irving." From which it will be seen that he was even then still thinking for himself in his delineation of character.

Liverpool enabled Irving to renew his acquaintance with Charles Mathews, whom he had met five years previously at Glasgow, and to cement a friendship which only ended with the death of the famous comedian. Mathews produced "The Silver Lining" during the second week of his engagement at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, and Irving won new honours by his impersonation of Arthur Merivale. The daily and weekly papers united in his praise and boldly stated that he shared the honours of the performance with Mathews. The prickly *Porcupine* analysed his delineation very closely and congratulated him "on the artistic vividness and decision of his personation. . . . There was something handsomely diabolic in the fixed sneer on his appropriately pale face; and the almost snarling tone in which he gave some of his most disagreeable speeches added immensely to their force. . . . In the case of another actor, it might be found that the mere talk of the part was so uninfluential as to give the development more than a touch of the ridiculous; but with Mr. Irving, manner, bearing, facial expression, and voice become full of alarming suggestiveness." Another remarkable impersonation followed immediately. This was Fox Bromley in Westland Marston's drama, "The Favourite of Fortune," which had been brought out during the previous week in Glasgow. E. A. Sothern, then in the height of his popularity, was the "star," but he did not overshadow the younger actor. It is evident that his capacity for getting at the heart of a character was on the increase. "In his hands," the *Porcupine* said, "the character is such a perfect study, down even to the minutest details, that we should have been glad to see more of him in the course of the piece, and it would have been still more interesting if his talk had been as forcible as his make-up, or as suggestive as his acting: it seemed a pity to expend so much artistic elaboration on a personage of such comparative unimportance. From an individual who looked like Mephistopheles in reduced circumstances, with a cross of German philosopher and a dash of Fosco,[1] we would naturally expect something more than smooth meanness and abject mendicity. . . . He is a remarkable character actor and bestows an amount of attention on every part he plays that nearly always results in the most unquestioned triumph. In Fox Bromley, he was fully equal to his previous notoriety. The wily hypocrite was noticeable in every lineament of face, form, and voice, and the thin, black moustache gave a ghastly grimness to his smile that might freeze the blood in the veins of any one over whom the wretch had power."

In those days, the younger members of the stock company had to play almost anything for which they were cast by the management. The Whitsuntide attraction at "the little house in the square" was Burnand's burlesque, "Paris, or Vive Lempriere". As Œnone, Irving had an absurd part in the representation of which he "displayed as much histrionic ability as he invariably does when he has an intelligent part to render". He also gave some clever parodies of favourite players of the day. His greatest triumph in Liverpool was in "Robert Macaire," which he played for his benefit on 24th May. The *Porcupine*, having recognised the versatility which he had shown throughout the season, found that his Macaire "was a Chesterfield and a gaol-bird in one, with a dash of Machiavelli, and a dash of Jingle. He was merribly miserable, jocosely wretched, and laughed with a grim determination and an echo suggesting a gallows-shriek." Truly, it must have been an inspiriting performance! However, there was "a great audience"—which was extremely satisfactory, considering the circumstances—"and it roared with jocularity, burst into ringing plaudits, and stamped its approval upon every broad touch of nature in the performance. But for the accident that the end of the season had come, Robert Macaire and Jacques Strop might have played their tragic comedy, their farcical burlesque of a melodrama, many nights on the same boards; and the Liverpudlian dramatic world have been the wiser and the better for the experience." After leaving Liverpool, he played with his friend, J. L. Toole, at Newcastle-on-Tyne and other places. The principal play of the evening was "Caleb Plummer," in which Irving acted John Peerybingle—a great proof of his versatility—and, it was said, realised all the manly, tender, and true-hearted attributes of the honest carrier to perfection. He also acted Victor Dubois in "Ici On Parle Français," Brown in "The Spitalfields Weaver," and recited the forbidden poem of his boyhood, "The Uncle".

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[1] Count Fosco, in "The Woman in White" by Wilkie Collins, then exceedingly popular.

He invariably spoke of his early days in Liverpool with kindly feeling. Within twelve months of his death, at a luncheon given by the Lord Mayor, at the Liverpool Town Hall, he said: "I have known Liverpool nearly fifty years. I remember it in the days which were for me days of apprenticeship and struggle, but also of considerable buoyancy, stimulated by the kindness which has culminated now, and in this distinguished company. Perhaps I was not quite so buoyant in the year 1860 as to anticipate the course that events were to take. In that year I spent a fortnight in Liverpool, and played a modest engagement at the old Theatre Royal.[1] Five years later, I was here again, and did something or other at the St. James's Hall in Lime Street. The eye of a young man is sometimes very prophetic; at any rate, it often seems to him in after years that he used to see a long way ahead. But I don't think my prophetic eye saw me across the gulf which separated St. James's Hall from the Town Hall. What I did in Lime Street I have forgotten—but what other people did, or failed to do, had the effect of leaving me to walk about that thoroughfare with a total lack of anything tangible to cling to. I must have indulged at that time in a good deal of airy speculation. There was nothing else to indulge in; but I am inclined to doubt, my Lord Mayor, whether I came down to the Exchange flags, and took a good look at the Town Hall, and said to myself: 'Well, there's a capital lunch, and there's uncommonly good company there for me—about forty years from now!' To the uneasy wayfarer in Lime Street there came in that year, 1865, a stroke of fortune in the shape of a six months' engagement at the Prince of Wales's Theatre in Clayton Square. From that time dates the encouragement I have always found in Liverpool—encouragement I owe above all to my old friend, Sir Edward Russell, one of the very finest critics of the drama this country has ever known."

The dreariness of the struggle in the provinces was now drawing to a close. Dion Boucicault, remembering the success which Irving had made in the part of Hardress Cregan two years previously, offered him an engagement to play an original part in his forthcoming drama, "The Two Lives of Mary Leigh". Accordingly, on Monday, 30th July, 1866, he acted the character of Rawdon Scudamore in the production of the drama at the Prince's Theatre, Manchester. His success was the stepping-stone to London, for he forthwith received three offers for the metropolis—from Charles Reade, Tom Taylor, and Dion Boucicault. He felt so sure of himself now, that when he accepted Boucicault's offer to play in Manchester, it was on the understanding that if he made a success as Rawdon Scudamore in the provinces, he should act the character in the London production of the drama. His interpretation of the part was so remarkable that it brought the offers of engagement from the three skilled judges of acting aforesaid, and he was no doubt wise in deciding to open in the metropolis in a part in which he knew that he could do himself justice. The local press noted that Irving, during his year's absence from Manchester, had improved in his acting "Many indications in his Scudamore," said the *Guardian*, in the course of a long notice of him, "show a progress in the capacity to realise and reflect the subtle traits which in inferior hands are overlooked or brushed aside in a comprehensive generalisation. Mr. Irving never neglects the little things which go far to sustain the unity of a character, nor does he deal with them with any seeming art. Having carefully and closely studied his part, he is simply consistent alike in the more marked features and in the lesser details. Hence it is that in the new drama he is a thorough rogue, and the instinctive shrinking from him is only an evidence of the cleverness with which Mr. Irving has succeeded in his self-imposed task." This recognition of his industry and ability must have been pleasing to him, as a reward for his long trial in Manchester. Before leaving that city, he played three other parts which were as different as possible, yet his merit in all was fully recognised. There could hardly be three characters more divergent than the Ghost in "Hamlet," honest Bob Brierley in "The Ticket-of-Leave Man," or the wily Fouché in "Plot and Passion". He delivered the lines of the first-named part, it need hardly be said, intelligently, but in a distinct voice which was in the approved sepulchral tones of the time. As Bob Brierley, he played easily and earnestly, giving assurance from the first that he was thoroughly at home in the part, as indeed he

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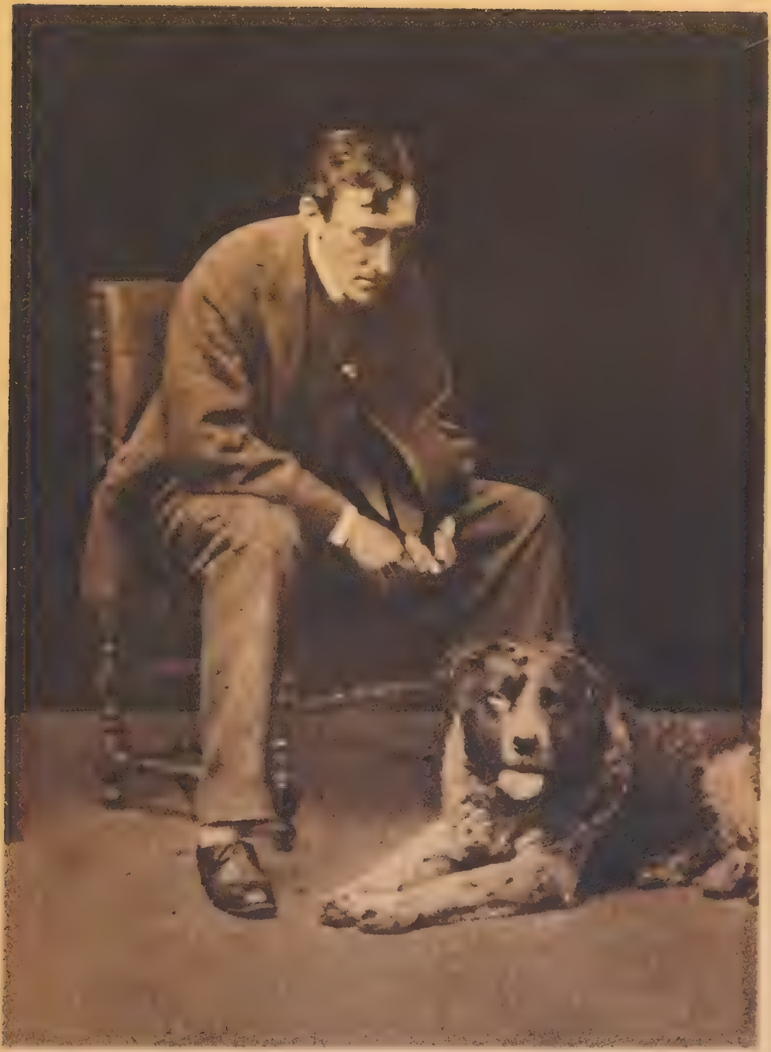
[1] This was soon after his first appearance in Manchester. The Theatre Royal there being required for Italian Opera, "Faust and Marguerite" was transferred for two weeks to Liverpool, where his impersonation of the "amatory alchymist" met with considerable favour.



From a photograph.

HENRY IRVING IN 1866.

was. The chief merit of that performance was his consistent and carefully thought out rendering of the character. His Fouché, in dress, look, manner, tone—in everything in fact, was an excellent rendering.

Exactly ten years passed before he succeeded, thanks to his foresight in making the stipulation with Boucicault in regard to the production of "The Two Lives of Mary Leigh," ere he got a foothold in London. During that strenuous period he had accomplished an amount of work which, even to those who knew his enormous capacity in this connection, is stupendous. During his first two and a half years on the stage, he acted—as was first recorded in my "biographical sketch" of 1883—the amazing number of four hundred and twenty-eight parts. Between 5th March 1860, and 30th July 1866, he added one hundred and sixty characters to his credit. In London he played eighty-three parts, including thirteen Shakespearean ones. The total number of characters which he impersonated is six hundred and seventy-one.[1] So that, when he came to London, he had a fine record for industry and a reputation as an ambitious actor. He had been in the best schools of acting—the stock companies of Edinburgh and Manchester—and he had supported some of the foremost players of the day including Helen Faucit, Charlotte Cushman, John Vandenhoff, Frederick Robson, Edwin Booth, E. A. Sothern, G. V. Brooke, and Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Florence. From a personal point of view, it was also his good fortune to meet, for the first time at Edinburgh, his lifelong friend, J. L. Toole, and, at Glasgow, Charles Mathews, who became one of his best and staunchest friends.

That these were ten years of trial and privation, is self-evident. Yet he never alluded to them in a complaining spirit. When he did recall them, it was only with a fleeting thought, or, as in the case of the kindly act of Joseph Robins, with tenderness. His sufferings, mental and physical, brought out the sympathetic side of his nature and inclined him to a

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[1] Charles Macklin played one hundred and fifty-eight parts, David Garrick but ninety-three.

"heart of melting charity". Twenty years after his hard-won probation in the provinces, he discoursed at the University of Oxford on four great actors of the past. In speaking of Edmund Kean, in connection with the early life of that famous player, there is no doubt that his own experiences had helped him to paint this vivid word-picture: "For many years after boyhood, his life was one of continual hardship. With that unsubdued conviction of his own powers which is often the sole consolation of genius, he toiled on and bravely struggled through the sordid miseries of a strolling player's life. The road to success lies through many a thorny course, across many a dreary stretch of desert land, over many an obstacle, from which the fainting heart is often tempted to turn back. But hope, and the sense of power within, which no discouragements can subdue, inspire the struggling artist still to continue the conflict, till at last courage and perseverance meet with their just reward, and success comes. The only feeling then to which the triumphant artist may be tempted is one of good-natured contempt for those who are so ready to applaud those merits which, in the past, they were too blind to recognise." These words, spoken of Kean by Henry Irving, were equally true of the latter actor. Even in 1866, his fight was only beginning. There were five more years of incessant work before him ere London was made aware of his remarkable power.

CHAPTER VI.

1866-1867.

Irving begins his London career—Stage-manager, as well as actor, at the St. James's—Doricourt—His success in "The Belle's Stratagem"—The friendship of Charles Mathews—Rawdon Scudamore—Irving's accuracy in costume—"The Road to Ruin," and other plays—Joseph Surface—Robert Macaire—Plays in Paris with Sothern—On tour with Miss Herbert—Liverpool praises him—Leaves the St. James's—Engaged at the Queen's Theatre, Long Acre—His Petruchio severely criticised—Miss Ellen Terry's reminiscence of this early meeting.

When Henry Irving made his first appearance at the St. James's Theatre—his first appearance in London that matters—adversity seemed to be still his fate. For he had anticipated making this important essay in the metropolis, according to agreement, in a character which he had already mastered, that of Rawdon Scudamore. Moreover, he had undertaken the duties of stage-manager, so that his anxieties were greater than those of the ordinary actor, who has only to play his part. There were difficulties in the way of producing Boucicault's drama at the opening of the season, and it was arranged that the old comedy, "The Belle's Stratagem," should be put up as a stop-gap. Oddly enough, out of the hundreds of parts which Irving had already acted, Doricourt had not fallen to his lot. Yet, on this memorable night of 6th October, 1866, he came out of the trying ordeal with flying colours. Long afterwards, in recalling the circumstances, he said: "I was cast for Doricourt, a part which I had never played before, and which I thought did not suit me; and I felt that this was the opinion of the audience soon after the play began. The house appeared to be indifferent, and I believed that failure was conclusively stamped upon my work, when suddenly, upon my exit after the mad scene, I was startled by a burst of applause, and so great was the enthusiasm of the audience that I was compelled to re-appear upon the scene, a somewhat unusual thing, except upon the operatic stage." He had, in addition to the applause of the audience, the satisfaction of receiving most favourable mention in a dozen newspapers, and this in spite of the fact that the manageress of the theatre, Miss Herbert, naturally came in for the larger share of notice in the character of Letitia Hardy. The majority of the criticisms gave him credit for being easy and gentlemanly. Another pointed out that in addition to these attributes, he was handsome, and that his acting evinced such a command over the resources of his art, such intelligence and innate power, as gave promise of much more than mere efficiency as a "jeune premier," rare as such efficiency then was. Another paper thought that he wanted the courtly air and the dash of polished gallantry "which Mr. Charles Kemble is said to have imparted to the character". The same journal went on to remark that, in the difficult scene in which Doricourt affects insanity, the actor was so successful that he "almost tempted the audience into the genuine lunacy of encoring his freak of mock madness"—a statement so contrary to the fact that not much reliance can be placed on the criticism in general. One fair example of the general tone of the criticisms will suffice for all: "Mr. Henry Irving is a most valuable addition to the St. James's company, and we welcome him to London with all sincerity. Doricourt's feigned mad scene was most artistically played, and quite devoid of exaggeration. Mr. Irving was summoned back to the stage in the middle of a scene to receive the congratulations of the audience." The stage-manager was less fortunate than the actor, for he had no opportunity in the matter of scenery. The comedy, it was said, "was execrably put on the stage. In four or five different scenes, intended to represent interiors of various rooms in gentlemen's houses, we had a wing on which was painted a rickety old cupboard, surmounted by jam-pots and pickle-jars. On the other side was a bit of a cottage; over the jam-pots hung a portrait." Still, acting was more important then than scenery. During the short run of the comedy, Irving was recalled each night in the middle of the act, a compliment which was the more remarkable since, as was pointed out in print at the time, he was quite unconnected with the management and had no friends in the front of the house, beyond the public, to aid in this tribute to the efficiency of his playing.[1]

Boucicault altered the name of his drama for London, calling it "Hunted Down," and making "The Two Lives of Mary Leigh" a sub-title. The villain of the play is Rawdon Scudamore, who hunts down the virtuous heroine for three acts, and is, of course, duly punished in the end. There was not a single note of dissension in the recognition which was given to this performance, Irving's ability and emotional power more than confirming the favourable impression which he had made in the preceding month. And, with another twelve critical commendations to add to those on his Doricourt, he began to receive some reward for his years of hard work. Here, as in the early days in Edinburgh, his attention to the details of dress was sufficient to attract attention. "Of Mr. Irving's Rawdon Scudamore," wrote one of the chief critics, "I find difficulty in speaking too highly. His 'make-up' and general tone indicate precisely the sort of scamp intended by Mr. Boucicault. When he is seedy, his seediness is not indicated by preposterous rags or by new trousers with a hole in them; his clothes are clothes that are well—but not too well—worn. In the second act, which shows him under more prosperous circumstances, his prosperity does not take the form of flashy coats, white hats, and patent-leather boots; he is dressed just as a 'roué' of some taste (but a 'roué' nevertheless) would dress himself. . . . The cool, quiet insolence with which he treats his devoted wife—the insolence of a man who is certain of her love, and wishes he was not—is the finest piece of undemonstrative acting that I have witnessed since I saw Mr. Hare as Prince Perovsky." In several other quarters, the *Times* especially, his performance was noticed for his very remarkable ability in depicting, merely by dint of facial expression, the most malignant feelings.[1]

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[1] "In my early days Mathews was a true friend to me—yes, and in the later days too. I remember when I first went to the St. James's Theatre, I went as stage-manager, and there were a lot of old actors there—amongst them Frank Matthews and Walter Lacy. I was a young man amongst these old stagers. I admit to feeling nervous, and was fearful lest I might do something which the older men might resent. The first day came. All went very nicely, and we were just commencing to rehearse 'The Belle's Stratagem,' when who should skip on to the stage but Charles Mathews! Stopping the rehearsal for the moment, he rushed up to Frank Matthews and Walter Lacy. 'Ah! Frank, my boy—Walter! one moment. My young friend, Irving—Frank, Walter. Be kind to him. Good-bye. God bless you!' And he was gone!"

"Hunted Down," produced on 5th November, was succeeded, on 9th February, 1867, by a revival of Holcroft's comedy, "The Road to Ruin". The chief part fell to Walter Lacy, an older and much esteemed actor in light comedy, Irving being cast for the dissipated hero, Young Dornton. By some papers he was praised for his grace and earnestness, in which he was thought to resemble Fechter, but, strangely enough, in his eagerness to bring out in strong colours the good points of the repentant rake, he was thought, by another writer "to miss the elegance and refinement of manner by which the part ought to be distinguished. There is plenty of remorse and anguish, but no vestige of the dash and brilliancy of the man of fashion." The allusion to his success in the pourtrayal of remorse and anguish at this stage of his career is interesting. He never was "a man of fashion". Holcroft's comedy was followed, on 3rd March, by "A Rapid Thaw"—

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[1] "Seated in a stage-box at the St. James's Theatre during the spring of 1866 were a gentleman and lady both distinguished in letters, and both good judges of the art of the player. They were absorbed in the piece performed on the stage; this happened to be 'Hunted Down,' notable for Miss Herbert's graceful performance of an ungracious part; on the present occasion specially notable for the appearance with her of Henry Irving, who enacted the villain of the play. . . . To the enquiry of the lady in the stage-box of her companion 'What do you think of him?' the answer came 'In twenty years he will be at the head of the English stage'. Thoughtfully murmured the lady, 'He is there, I think, already'. The two interlocutors in the conversation now recalled were the novelist known as George Eliot and George Henry Lewes."—T. H. S. Escott, in *Personal Forces of the Period.*

an ominous title!—an adaptation by T. W. Robertson, of Sardou's "Le Dégel," in which he played a fortune-hunting Irishman, O'Hooligan. The play failed and was withdrawn as speedily as possible. Revivals of "The School for Scandal"—in which Irving played Joseph Surface—and "Robert Macaire," in which he again acted the title rôle, filled in the time until the production, on 22nd April, of "Idalia, or the Adventurers," a three-act drama partly founded on Ouida's novel. Irving played a mysterious being—who, in the end, turns out to be the father of the heroine, a most desirable lady whose "loveliness is such that no man's heart is proof against, and her riches are almost as great as her beauty". Count Falcon had an excellent dying scene in which he cleared the way for the marriage of his daughter, the beauteous Idalia, to a passionate young Englishman, a part in which Charles Wyndham made his first appearance at the St. James's. Irving, it was said, played Count Falcon with much care and power, giving a fine picture of a resolute, unflinching man, in whose nature so little of good was interwoven "that what was best in nature became almost bad in development"—truly, a difficult character. Various performances were given for benefits towards the end of the season in May. Irving, for his own benefit, repeated his impersonation of Rawdon Scudamore, and acted Charles Arundell in "My Aunt's Advice," his friend, Sothern, playing Captain Leslie. For the benefit of the manageress, "Lady Audley's Secret" was produced, with Irving as Robert Audley, and, in aid of a charitable performance, he acted Charles Torrens in "A Serious Family".

On 8th July, Irving began his one and only engagement in Paris. Sothern, then in the very hey-day of his success, appeared at the Théâtre des Italiens as Lord Dundreary, and among the company supporting him were two old friends who had met in Edinburgh, Edward Saker, and Henry Irving—who played the drunken lawyer's clerk, Abel Murcott—and the American comedian, John T. Raymond. The Parisians did not understand Lord Dundreary, but this lack of appreciation did not prevent Sothern and his companions from enjoying their visit to the French capital. The change of scene must have been a pleasant one for Irving, although it was not exactly a holiday. For, early in August, he was on tour with Miss Herbert, his repertory including, in addition to Doricourt, Joseph Surface, and Robert Audley, Captain Absolute in "The Rivals," Young Marlow in "She Stoops to Conquer," and Young Wilding in Charles Mathew's reduced version of Foote's comedy, "The Liar". In such critical theatrical centres as Manchester, Dublin, Bristol, and Bath, his efforts were received with every appreciation. The praise bestowed upon him in Manchester must have been particularly gratifying to him. The *Courier* eulogised his Joseph Surface as a conception of a high and uniform type, which "well deserved the call which it obtained at the fall of the curtain. His polished and courteous manner, veiling the intense and heartless selfishness which peeps out from time to time, is admirably sustained ; nor is the accidental failure of temper in the last scene less artistic or less carefully studied". And to be favourably noticed by the *Irish Times* must have been some small consolation for the hisses and jeers of the Dublin "boys" of 1860.

At the end of September, immediately following the tour with Miss Herbert, he played a special engagement in Liverpool which gave him further encouragement and strengthened him for a disappointment which he met with on his return to London in October. The "inauguration of the regular comedy and burlesque season" at the Prince of Wales's Theatre was marked by the performance of Craven's comedy-drama, "Meg's Diversion," with Miss Milly Palmer as the heroine, and Burnand's burlesque, "Helen, or Taken from the Greek". The former play was not new to Liverpool, but it was given much notice in the local press. The philosophical baronet, Ashley Merton, was warmly praised, and what is more remarkable still, the *Daily Post* ventured on a statement and a prophecy which must have given considerable gratification to the writer, whoever he was, if he lived until the end of 1871. "Mr. Irving's representation," said this critic, "was a strong confirmation of our opinion that he is one of the few great actors on the stage. Not that his performance had any greatness in it, but for the reason that he succeeded in making it as remarkable an assumption as the limited area created by the dramatist would allow. He seemed superior to his part, and it would be difficult to drive away the impression that there is any rôle superior to him. His rendering was the only one that gave us unalloyed satisfaction." These discerning and prophetic words must have been a tremendous help at this important part of his career to the ambitious actor. There is no wonder that he always thought with kindness and gratitude of Liverpool and its people.

After this brief, but, in his case, successful tour, in the artistic sense, at least, he returned to the St. James's Theatre under engagement to the American actor, John Sleeper Clarke, who, on 16th October, made his first appearance in London as Major Wellington de Boots in "The Widow Hunt," a slightly altered version of a comedy entitled "Everybody's Friend," in which the Major had originally been acted by J. B. Buckstone. The light comedy part of Felix Featherley was not an advance for the actor whose merits as Rawdon Scudamore had won him such an excellent reputation in London as a character actor, nor was the excitable dunderhead, Ferment, in "The School of Reform"—in which Clarke played Tyke—of service to him. Moreover, as stage-manager during the previous season at the St. James's, he had received additional remuneration beyond his salary as an actor. As this was now refused to him—although he had returned to the St. James's on the understanding that he was to receive the same terms as before—he left that theatre.

While he was performing at the St. James's Theatre, a new play-house was opened in Long Acre. This was called the Queen's. It stood on the site, and within the walls, of St. Martin's Hall, the scene of the first reading in London by Charles Dickens. "The Double Marriage," a five-act drama, by Charles Reade, was the chief attraction on the opening night, on 24th October, 1867. This was followed, in November, by a revival of "Still Waters Run Deep," which held the bill until Christmas week. Then came, on 26th December, "Katherine and Petruchio," in which Henry Irving and Miss Ellen Terry met for the first time on any stage. For Irving had been engaged at the Queen's Theatre by Alfred Wigan, who was announced as lessee and manager of the new house. The company included, in addition to Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Wigan, John Ryder, John Clayton, Mr. Lionel Brough, Mr. Charles Wyndham, Miss Carlotta Addison, Miss Henrietta Hodson (now Mrs. Henry Labouchere), and Miss Ellen Terry. The position of the latter lady may be gathered from the fact that her salary was £15 a week, while Irving's was little more than half that sum—£8. Even Wyndham, a beginner, received £12. "Katherine and Petruchio"—Garrick's ruthless condensation of "The Taming of the Shrew"—was a comparatively minor item of the programme. For the great feature of the season was the popular—and he was then extremely popular—comedian, J. L. Toole. He followed the opening piece of the evening in "Doing for the Best" and "The Birthplace of Podgers". It is more than probable that he had been instrumental in getting Irving engaged at the Queen's, as he was a power with the management, as may be imagined from his salary, which was the highest of all—£32 10s. a week. Be this as it may, the Petruchio of the moment received a severe castigation from the *Times*—the only criticism which was kept by Henry Irving's father. "Mr. H. Irving who made his London dêbut at the St. James's about a twelvemonth since," it said, "is a very valuable actor, and the manager of the new Queen's has shown great judgment in securing his services. His representation of the gamester in Mr. Boucicault's 'Hunted Down'—an excellent piece, never appreciated according to its deserts—and the drunkenness of despair proper to Henry Dornton in the latter portion of 'The Road to Ruin,' were, in their way, perfect; but Petruchio is just one of those parts which he cannot hit. Those who are old enough to recollect the late Mr. Charles Kemble's Petruchio will easily bring to mind the gentlemanlike rollick with which he carried off the extravagancies of the shrew tamer, showing that at bottom he was a man of high breeding, though for the nonce he found it expedient to behave like a ruffian. No impression of this kind is left by Mr. H. Irving. His early scenes are feeble, and when he has brought home his bride he suggests the notion rather of a brigand chief who has secured a female captive than of an honest gentleman engaged in a task of moral reform. Moreover, before he takes his position as a speaker of blank verse, certain defects of articulation require emendation." This was certainly severe, but it was holiday time, and the farce was only the first of the three pieces on the programme.

Soon after her performance of Katherine, Miss Ellen Terry retired into private life, and she was not seen again in public until early in 1874. Her next meeting with Henry Irving was at the end of 1878—eleven years after she was the Katherine to his Petruchio. In the meantime, as so much ridiculous nonsense has been written about this chance acquaintance in 1867, it is important—for the accuracy of stage history—that it should be borne in mind that in the interim since their playing at the Queen's, Henry Irving had attained his great position as the recognised head of the English stage. The details will be dealt with in their proper place, but it should be set down here that, after losing sight of Miss Terry at the commencement of 1868, and before he saw her again nearly eleven years later, Henry Irving had acted Mathias in "The Bells," Charles the First, Eugene Aram, Richelieu, Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Richard the Third, Lesurques and Dubosc, and Louis XI. Several of these characters—Mathias, Charles the First, Lesurques and Dubosc, and Louis XI.—he acted continually until his death. Miss Terry's own evidence in regard to her early association with Henry Irving is rather interesting. In her "Stray Memories," she says: "From the first I noticed that Mr. Irving worked more concentratedly than all the other actors put together, and the most important lesson of my working life I learnt from him, that to do one's work well, one must *work continually*, live a life of constant self-denial for that purpose, and in short, keep one's nose upon the grind-stone. It is a lesson one had better learn early in stage life, I think, for the bright, glorious, healthy career of a successful actor is but brief at the best. There is an old story told of Mr. Irving being 'struck with my talent at this time, and promising that if he ever had a theatre of his own he'd give me an engagement!' But that is all moonshine. As a matter of fact, I'm sure he never thought of me at all at that time. I was just then acting very badly, and feeling ill, caring scarcely at all for my work, or a theatre, or anybody belonging to a theatre."

CHAPTER VII.

1868-1871.

Irving recognised as an impersonator of villains—His Bob Gassitt, Bill Sikes, and Robert Redburn—Dickens prophecies that he will become "a great actor"—Plays the hero for a change—Various characters—On tour with Toole—An unsuccessful engagement at the Haymarket—His marriage—Acts in "Formosa" at Drury Lane—Gives a recital at Bayswater—Mr. Chevenix at the Gaiety—More praise from Dickens—Digby Grant, in "Two Roses"—A great success in London and the provinces—Recognised as an actor who could create—Recites "The Dream of Eugene Aram"—And makes a wonderful impression.

IRVING remained at the Queen's Theatre for over a year, and during that time he played three parts which did much to enhance his reputation. The first of these was Bob Gassitt in "Dearer than Life," the second Bill Sikes, the third Robert Redburn in "The Lancashire Lass"—a trio of villains of different types. "Dearer than Life," a three-act drama by Henry J. Byron, was written for J. L. Toole, and, though not avowedly indebted to "The Porter's Knot," in which Frederick Robson was celebrated, it was very like that play, the truth being that both pieces were more or less founded on experiences in real life. Toole, who was chiefly known as the interpreter of outrageous farce at the Adelphi, was provided with a character in which he showed his wonderful command of pathos. His Michael Garner was a most admirable performance. It is unnecessary to go into the details of the plot, but it may be stated that the affectionate, self-sacrificing father, Michael Garner, had an only son, Charlie—represented by Mr. Wyndham—who was lured into evil paths by Bob Gassitt, a vulgar, dissipated scoundrel—a flash, uneducated loafer. One notice of Irving's impersonation of this scamp was rather curious. It praised him for making "a finished sketch," yet objected to "his hair as improbably long, and the gilt buttons on his coat—for the waistcoat they are well enough—are improbably outrageous; but the portraiture of the Champagne Charlie swell, is as striking as it is new, and Mr. Irving adds as finishing touches some of those traces of amorous passion in the midst of villainy, for which he has an especial gift." In another paper, the staid *Globe*, the representative of Bob Gassitt was very strongly recommended to indulge in gagging. "Mr. H. Irving," said this mentor, "has a capital part, makes-up effectively, and plays with admirable tact and judgment. As a piece of stage portraiture, not overdrawn or varied from fact, the character is equal to anything at present on the boards of the metropolis. The only point to which we should like to call the actor's attention is the pronunciation. Gassitt is rightly supposed to be illiterate, but in some of the scenes Mr. Irving makes him more so than in others. The habit of slang is not sufficiently characterised as distinct from the ignorance evinced in the manner of speech. We suspect there is something wrong with the words, and the actor would do well to examine them with this view. 'Gagging,' is a bad habit, but it would be better to adopt it than spoil the part. However, the author is at hand, and could surely be induced to make some emendations. We notice this matter at length because Bob Gassitt is quite as good and as important in its way as was the character in which Mr. Bancroft kept 'Caste' running at the Prince of Wales' so long." The Bancrofts, by the way, had made their little house off the Tottenham Court Road—it was so small that the stage of the present Scala Theatre almost covers the entire site—a home of domestic comedy, the chief apostle of which was T. W. Robertson, the author of "School," "Caste," "Ours," and kindred plays. It was considered a great compliment to Irving to compare him with the artists of this theatre—and to compare him favourably. "Mr. Irving, like Mr. Mathews, Mr. Sothern, and other eminent artists, studies, and studies successfully, in this school of nature; his types are drawn from human nature—not stage-nature, as too many actors' notions of a part appear to be; and his impersonations, therefore, are truthful and eminently satisfactory. Not only in rendering the words and the general 'business,' as it is called, is he admirable, but he shows the true perceptions of an artist in his knowledge of bye-play. For instance, as Bob Gassitt, in his scene with Lucy in the last act, his position before the fire is capital; more noticeable still is the tarrying at the window to make up his mind before breaking to her the cruel falsehood he has prepared." The criticisms on Bob Gassitt were the longest which he had received since coming to London. They were also very favourable, and they are the more noteworthy from the presence in the play of an established favourite. They point, indeed, to the fact that Irving was at last beginning to make himself felt. "Dearer than Life," brought out on 8th January, 1868, ran for three months.

His Bill Sikes was another step in his favour. There was some little excitement prior to the production—on Saturday, the 11th April—of John Oxenford's dramatisation of "Oliver Twist". For there were rumours that a license had been refused by the Lord Chamberlain. The *Morning Post*, somewhat unkindly, thought it a pity that "Oliver Twist" had been allowed to see the footlights. "It has only been revived to be buried once more, for there seems little doubt that the unfavourable verdict of last Saturday night's audience will be generally approved by the majority of the public"—a verdict that was stultified by future events, for Toole was seen in a modified version of the piece for many years. His "Artful Dodger," however, was not accounted a success at first. "Many an admirable actor has made a mistake before now, and though Mr. Toole has in this instance made a mistake, he is nevertheless an admirable actor. Mr. Irving's 'Bill Sikes,' on the other hand," continued the *Morning Post*, "was really artistic and good. His make-up—closely and accurately copied from George Cruikshank—was admirable, and, except when he awkwardly paced the stage after Fagin's denunciation of Nancy, he played the character remarkably well—almost as well, indeed, as he looked it, and that is great praise."

Another morning paper denounced "Oliver Twist" in good set terms. It doubted "whether it was wise to secure this dramatic novelty, curious and comic as it is, at the risk of disgusting the public by a broad delineation of the Sikes department of the story. These awakened unqualified disapproval, though the Sikes of Mr. Irving was in its very brutishness a fine intellectual study, and Miss Nelly Moore, as Nancy, carried the sympathies of the audience as thoroughly as Mr. Dickens himself could have desired." Poor Toole and some provincial audiences came in for very severe treatment: "Even Mr. Toole's slangy gaieties as the Dodger seemed to surfeit very rapidly, and points of exceeding cleverness, which great audiences in Birmingham, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Glasgow, and Belfast are well-known to find endlessly and uproariously amusing, were scanned with a suspicious and critical air by no means likely to keep up the spirits of such a favourite as Mr. Toole, to whom anything but the most balmy public favour is an absolutely new experience". Thus spake the *Morning Star*. But it had much to say in praise of Bill Sikes and Nancy, as interpreted by Henry Irving and Miss Nelly Moore. Nancy "has always, in spite of her cotton gown, and cheap shawl, her curl papers, and her street-door key, been a real favourite with the readers of the story, and Miss Moore equally retains the sympathies of those who see the play. Her acting is full of gentleness, and yet full of force—abounding in pathos, and ready, when need is, to brighten into humour. As for Mr. Irving, he seems to have solved what seemed a difficulty even to Mr. Dickens himself, who, in asserting that 'there are such men as Sikes, who being followed through the space of time and through the same current of circumstances, would not give by the action of a moment the faintest indication of a better nature,' was in doubt 'whether every gentler human feeling is dead within such bosoms, or the proper cord has rusted and is hard to find'. In the grim brutality of Sikes's face, as realised by

Mr. Irving, there lives a rooted bitterness of loathing for himself, his life, his luck, his surroundings, which suggests another and not less pregnant explanation of the character, for where remorse is truly hopeless the last light of good in a man may well have become extinct. It is in the constant angry brooding of the villain that Mr. Irving profoundly exhibits to us a probable source of all his callous and unmitigated ruffianism."

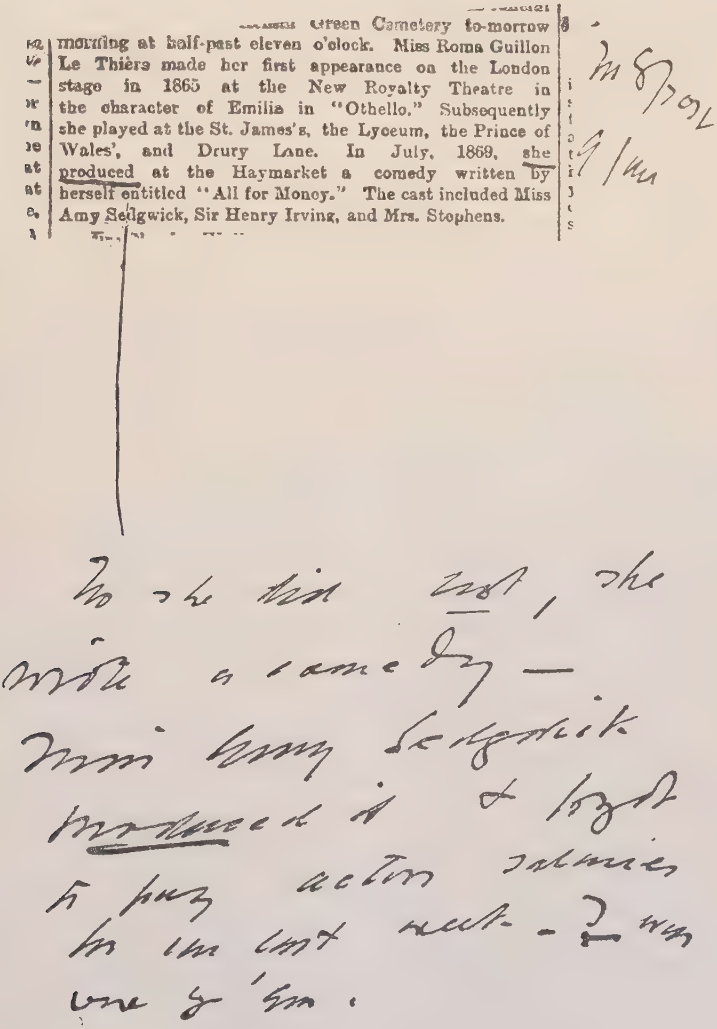
Irving's third villain at the Queen's did not give him as much scope as either of its predecessors. But, as "The Lancashire Lass" had a run of six months, it was useful in keeping him before the public for a long time, in a character which he acted admirably. The drama was, like "Dearer than Life," the work of Henry J. Byron, and it had had a preliminary trial in Liverpool during the previous autumn. It was produced in London on the 24th July, and Irving acted Robert Redburn, an adventurer of most conventional pattern—a cigar-smoking scamp, "whose rascality is associated with the utmost degree of cool audacity, and whose heartlessness is displayed by a simultaneous knitting of the brows and caress of the moustache". Both the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* praised the performance, and the *Morning Star* analysed it at great length. It thought Irving "a very Disraeli of the genus" adventurer. He "dressed with great care and modest variety—made-up as to the head, in dealing with which most of our actors are exceedingly clumsy, with most suggestive, yet most natural significance—ingenious in those little actions which, while intrinsically unmeaning, reveal character and relieve the stress on an audience's attention, this admirable actor of polished villains is a most unbounded success. Neither he nor his audience were for a moment ill at ease. His repose was perfect without languor, his strong passages emphatic without effort; that he was capable of real feeling was proved by the volumes of emotion revealed in the voice with which, during Clayton's imprisonment, Redburn urged his mad suit to Ruth; that he was incapable of weakness or soft-heartedness was evident from the aspect of the man as he listened to the description of his own character by his would-be accomplice, 'the party by the name of Johnson'." The latter character was impersonated by Sam Emery, other parts being taken by Mr. Lionel Brough, Mr. Wyndham, Miss Henrietta Hodson, and Miss Nelly Moore. Unfortunately, there is no record of Irving's Bill Sikes having been witnessed by Charles Dickens. But the author did see him as Robert Redburn, and in discussing "The Lancashire Lass," on his return from the drama, said: "But there was a young fellow in the play who sits at the table and is bullied by Sam Emery; his name is Henry Irving, and if that young man does not one day come out as a great actor, I know nothing of art".

The impersonations of these three typical scoundrels were Irving's most marked successes at the Queen's Theatre. But he acted several other parts there. On 1st June, 1868, he played Charles Surface on the occasion of his benefit, the cast including Alfred Wigan as Joseph Surface, Mr. Lionel Brough as Crabtree, Toole as Moses, Miss Nelly Moore as Lady Teazle, Miss Henrietta Hodson as Lady Sneerwell, and Mrs. Wigan as Mrs. Candour. Four days later, at an afternoon performance, at the Haymarket Theatre, in aid of the funds of the now defunct Royal Dramatic College, he appeared as Cool in "London Assurance". It was the season of benefits for, on 8th July, Alfred Wigan took his, at the Queen's Theatre, with "The Rivals"—in which Irving acted Faulkland—as the chief attraction. The next production after "The Lancashire Lass" took place on 13th February, 1869. It was a four-act play, by Watts Phillips, called "Not Guilty". There were villains galore in this piece, and, although one of them, a scoundrel who bore a facial resemblance to "an officer and a gentleman," might have suited Henry Irving, he elected to appear as the typical, long-suffering, virtuous hero, Robert Arnold, who, after many adventures by flood and field, was eventually proclaimed "not guilty" of a crime which he had not committed, and for which he had been sent to penal servitude. The drama, even for the unsophisticated play-goer of forty years ago, was a little too transparent. The story is far too long to be quoted in full. The final scene is a fair example of the entire piece. The persecuted heroine has just departed when "the false Sir Ormond and Arnold enter, the former cynical and self-possessed, the latter full of indignant passion. At last, goaded by the sneering insolence of his rival, Arnold raises his hand, a short struggle ensues, interrupted by the entrance of St. Clair, Alice, guests, and others, from the neighbouring croquet lawn, and then the false Sir Ormond proclaims Robert Arnold unfit, as a convict who had escaped, ten years ago, from Dartmoor, for the society of ladies and gentlemen. 'But he was not guilty,' is St. Clair's indignant exclamation! 'The real robber was Silas Jarrett!' cries a voice behind the false Sir Ormond, whose sleeve is, at the same time, ripped up to the elbow by Jack Snipe, who, with the two rascals, Vidler and the Polecat, has crept down the stage unperceived. 'Read for yourselves,' he cries, pointing to the arm, which is tattooed with the words 'Silas Jarrett, traitor!'" This old-fashioned stuff was too much even for the innocent theatre-goer of 1869. A month later, the chief actors took their benefits at the Queen's and their departure therefrom. On 15th March, "She Stoops to Conquer" was given by Mr. Lionel Brough for his benefit, Irving being the Young Marlow. On the 19th, for his own benefit, he appeared as Henri de Neuville in "Plot and Passion," supported by Mrs. Hermann Vezin as Marie de Fontanges, Toole as Desmarets, Mr. Brough as Grisboulle, and Sam Emery as Fouché. During this month he also played, at Drury Lane, Brown in "The Spitalfields Weavers," for a charity performance, and, at the Queen's, he acted Victor Dubois in "Ici On Parle Français" and John Peerybingle in "Caleb Plummer". In the three latter plays he was, of course, associated with his old friend, Toole.

On leaving the Queen's, he accompanied the popular comedian on a tour of the provinces and some of the theatres in the London district including the Standard and the Surrey. In regard to the latter house, Toole refused to book the engagement at first on account of the manager declining to pay Irving's salary. Toole stuck to his friend, and the salary was paid. His characters during this tour were varied: Bob Gassitt, in "Dearer than Life;" Bill Sikes; Brown, in "The Spitalfields Weavers;" Victor Dubois, in "Ici on parle Français;" and Peerybingle, in Boucicault's version, then called "Caleb Plummer," of "The Cricket on the Hearth". It is strange to think of Irving as honest John Peerybingle, especially after his late round of villains, but he was praised in several papers for his manly, tender impersonation. He also recited Bell's poem, "The Uncle," an honour which, it will be recalled, had been denied to him in his boyhood by the worthy Mr. Pinches. On returning to London, he appeared, at the Haymarket Theatre, in the production, on 12th July, of "All for Money". The regular company was away on tour, the season was only a supplementary one, and the comedy had a brief life. But, to the few people who saw it, it served to increase the good opinion which had been formed of the acting of Henry Irving at the St. James's and Queen's theatres. He played Captain Fitzhubert, an impecunious gambler, who marries for money. "When it is stated that Mr. Henry Irving plays the part," said the *Times*, "it will be readily believed that a thoroughly artistic personation is the result." He was dubbed "the very king of fashionable villains" by one organ, while another pronounced him "absolutely without a rival" in this class of character.

And thereby hangs a tale. "All for Money" was well remembered by Irving, for two special reasons. In January, 1903, an actress who was well-known in her day, Miss Roma Guillon Le Thière, died, and one of our morning papers fell into the mistake, in its obituary, of attributing, not only the authorship of "All for Money" to the deceased actress, but the responsibility of putting it on the stage. "In July, 1869," it stated, "she produced at the Haymarket a comedy written by herself entitled 'All for Money'. The cast included Miss Amy Sedgwick, Sir Henry Irving, and Mrs. Stephens."

The paper was hardly damp from the press ere the actor sent me a note in which he corrected the statement. He underlined the word "produced" in the paragraph and wrote under it: "No she did *not*, she wrote a comedy—Miss Amy Sedgwick *produced* it and forgot to pay actors salaries for the last week—*I* was one of 'em".



Green Cemetery to-morrow morning at half-past eleven o'clock. Miss Roma Guillon Le Thière made her first appearance on the London stage in 1865 at the New Royalty Theatre in the character of Emilia in "Othello." Subsequently she played at the St. James's, the Lyceum, the Prince of Wales', and Drury Lane. In July, 1869, she produced at the Haymarket a comedy written by herself entitled "All for Money." The cast included Miss Amy Sedgwick, Sir Henry Irving, and Mrs. Stephens.

[illegible]

No she did not, she wrote a comedy— Miss Amy Sedgwick produced it & forgot to pay actors salaries for the last week—I was one of 'em.

There was a very special reason for the circumstance in question being vividly impressed on his recollection. For financial worry is out of place at all times in the life of an artist, but more especially during the honeymoon. And, within three days of the production of "All for Money," Henry Irving had married a young and pretty Irish girl, tall and fair-haired, Miss Florence O'Callaghan, the daughter of Surgeon-General O'Callaghan, a man for whom he had great friendship and admiration. The ceremony took place on 15th July, 1869, at the parish church of St. Marylebone; the wedding reception being held at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Matthews, Linden Grove, Bayswater. The father of the bride was a distinguished man—Daniel James O'Callaghan, whose eldest brother, John Cornelius, was one of the celebrated literary men of Ireland of the last century—the author of "The Green Book, or Gleanings from the Desk of a Literary Agitator". His father, John O'Callaghan, was one of the first Catholics admitted to the profession of attorney in Ireland after the partial relaxation of the penal laws in 1793. He acquired considerable wealth. Daniel, his youngest son, was born in Merrion Square, Dublin, and was educated at the Jesuit College of Chongowes Wood, County Kildare. After serving in the navy, he joined the Honourable East India Company's service in January, 1842. He was employed with the Field Hospital of the Army of the Sutlej with the 49th Bengal Native Infantry. He was also engaged in the Chinese war of 1860, for which he received the medal. In the Indian Mutiny in 1857, he acted as Surgeon in Chief Medical Charge of Foot Artillery at the siege of Delhi, and was present at the storming and capture of the city, for which he received the medal and clasp. Until December, 1872, he was the Inspector-General of Hospitals. He retired in that year, with the rank of Surgeon-General. He died, in August, 1900, at the age of eighty-five. While in India, he was noted for his contributions to the press, and he was on the staff of the chief Calcutta papers. His wife was a Miss Elizabeth Walsh, daughter of Mr. George Walsh, of the Foreign Office, and of King's County family. Miss Walsh was remarkable for her intellect no less than her personal beauty.

There were two children of the marriage of Henry Irving to Miss Florence O'Callaghan—Henry Brodribb, born on 5th August, 1870, and Laurence Sidney Brodribb, born on 21st December, 1871. In reference to his elder son, Sir Henry, in June, 1901, observed a statement in one of the Sunday papers, in connection with the death of Dr. Morley, brother of Mr. John Morley. The veracious gossiper affirmed that the deceased doctor attended the birth of Mr. H. B. Irving, an event which was supposed to have occurred in Blackburn, and that the actor had spent a winter in the Lancashire town. Whereupon Irving wrote to me: "The truthful paragraphist! Amusing! I never met him, and was never in Blackburn in my life! Harry was born in London." The birth of their second son also took place in London. In three months after that, the parents were parted, the husband leaving his domicile—for reasons which do not concern the public, and need not be entered upon—and taking up his abode with the Bateman family, first of all at Kensington Gore and then at Rutland Gate. He subsequently lived, for a little while, in chambers in Bruton-street, Bond-street; he then took the chambers in Grafton-street, Bond-street, which he occupied, for many years, until 1899, when he was advised by his doctors to remove to sunnier quarters in Stratton-street, Piccadilly. It was not until 1879, when a deed of separation was entered into between the actor and his wife, that the final parting came. Lady Irving, who survives her husband, had the care of the

15A GRAFTON STREET, BOND STREET, AS IT APPEARED DURING IRVING'S LONG RESIDENCE THERE.

children until they went to college, and they lived with her until they married.

Irving's celebrity as an impersonator of "fashionable villains" next took him to Drury Lane, where, on 5th August, he played the villain again—a comparatively mild one, but a villain still—in the production of Boucicault's drama, "Formosa, or the Railroad to Ruin". The play was condemned as being an imitation of a better piece, "The Flying Scud," by the same author, and for introducing to the English stage a picture of life to which, unfortunately, twentieth-century audiences have become habituated. One specimen of the denunciation of "Formosa" may be given. The *Sunday Times*—the criticisms in which carried great weight—protested that it had "never been numbered among those who would unduly limit the subjects with which art may concern itself. We would leave the artist's finger to roam at will over the gamut of life, choosing whatever notes produce the fullest harmony. But there is no question here of art or harmony. To vindicate the production on the stage of such scenes as those exhibited in Mr. Boucicault's second act on the ground that they are common, would justify a good many things dramatists are not likely to attempt. For God's sake, let us leave to the French the exhibition of the sickly splendour and sentiment of the life of the courtesan. We know, and will concede, that when a young man goes with fullest rapidity to ruin, infamous women generally aid his fall. We may even allow, in truly artistic works, indications of the agencies by which the ruin has been accomplished. But to exhibit, at length, with however moral a purpose, the nastiness of life in the 'demi-monde,' is an innovation we see with regret." Despite this, and other protests of a similar nature, "Formosa" had a run at Drury Lane of one hundred and seventeen consecutive nights. The character played by Henry Irving, Compton Kerr, had no distinguishing features. As one observant journal was fain to remark, "Mr. Irving has played a villain sufficiently frequent to be up in the part. He presented, accordingly, in satisfactory fashion, the appearance and manner of the high-bred rascal of modern days."

There was really no more to be said. Irving was by now a past master in presenting the conventional villains of melodrama. And, as it turned out, he finished with them before 1870. At that time, he numbered among his personal friends a handsome young actor, then a member of the Prince of Wales's Theatre, H. J. Montague, and this friendship resulted, indirectly, in his engagement at the Lyceum two years afterwards. In the autumn of 1869, the two young actors joined forces and gave, on the afternoon of Saturday, 23rd October, some dramatic readings and recitals at the Westbourne Hall, Westbourne Grove, Bayswater. The two friends relied entirely upon their own efforts; they had not even the assistance of music. Their interesting programme was as follows:—

PART I.

Reading	"Gemini and Virgo"	C. S. C.
	Mr. Henry Irving.	
Recital	"The Demon Ship"	Hood.
	Mr. Montague.	
Reading	"Waterloo" (Childe Harold)	Byron.
	Mr. Irving.	
Reading	"Paddy O'Rafferty's Say Voyage"	Anon.
	Mr. Montague.	
Reading	"Ion" (selection), Act 2, Scene 1	Talfourd.
	Messrs. Irving and Montague.	

PART II.

Reading	"Othello" (selection), Act 2, Scene 3	Shakespeare.
	Messrs. Montague and Irving.	
Reading	"Death of Joe the Crossing Sweeper" (Bleak House)	Dickens.
	Mr. Montague.	
Recital	"The Uncle"	H. G. Bell.
	Mr. Irving.	
Reading	"The Rivals" (selection), Acts 2 and 3, Scene 1	Sheridan.
	Messrs. Montague and Irving.	

Irving's next character, Reginald Chevenix, enabled him, once and for all, to get away from the stage villain. A piece called "Uncle Dick's Darling" had been written for Toole by H. J. Byron. Toole was anxious for Irving to act with him again, and the feeling was heartily reciprocated. But "Formosa" was still running at Drury Lane, and the new play was due early in December. But, very fortunately for the subject of this biography, the manager of the Gaiety Theatre, John Hollingshead, had "some slight influence" with the manager of Drury Lane, F. B. Chatterton, who released his "gentlemanly villain" from his engagement. Accordingly, on 13th December, Henry Irving acted Mr. Chevenix at the Gaiety, and made a pronounced success. The play was very reminiscent of other works, more particularly, "Doctor Marigold's Prescription," by Dickens, and the character acted by Irving had obviously been modelled on Mr. Dombey. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that he made an impression that was just as favourable in London as that created by him in 1861, when he played Mr. Dombey in Manchester. Mr. Chevenix is a conceited, cold, pompous, methodical man of the world, with an aristocratic bias. Irving's personation was as full of delicate work as one of Meissonier's pictures. His make-up with stiff stock and curls, similar to the old "bucks" of Cruikshank's middle period—was generally recognised as a triumph of its kind. "It is the fashion," wrote one critic, "to say that Mr. Irving can only play villains. Well, he certainly can play villains; but I know few young actors who could so thoroughly interpret, both in appearance and acting, the author's meaning in Mr. Chevenix." The Prince of Wales, it may be added, was present on the first night, and sent for Mr. Toole, to whom he expressed his gratification at the performance. Dickens witnessed the play and was favourably impressed by Irving's acting,

After long years of working and watching for his opportunity, Irving at last got his chance—and took it. His friend, H. J. Montague, joined forces with two extremely favourite players, David James and Mr. Thomas Thorne, in the management of the Vaudeville Theatre, then a new house. It was opened on 16th April, 1870, with a comedy, by Andrew Halliday, entitled "For Love or Money". The part of Alfred Skimmington, "a handsome west-end swell, who is currently reported to be worth £3,000 a year, but who has not given his attention very closely to morals," was not capable of much development, though Irving was credited with a carefully finished portrait. Nor was the comedy a success. It was succeeded, on 4th June, by a play which brought the impersonator of Digby Grant into great prominence—"Two Roses," the work of James Albery, then a new writer. The play had its own intrinsic merit, and its general interpretation was exceptionally good. The cast, indeed, was a strong one, including George Honey, H. J. Montague, Mr. Thorne, and Miss Amy Fawsitt—all admirable actors—in addition to Irving. Digby Grant, is the father of the "Two Roses," Lottie and Ida, an impecunious gentleman who, to the slenderest of purses, adds descent from a noble family, with the result which is usual on the stage—pride of birth and ancestry upon which he frequently descants. In the earlier scenes, he is struggling hard, in the face of financial embarrassment, to preserve his dignity. But, compelled by his inability otherwise to command certain wants and luxuries which his tastes demand, he condescends to associate with some people who are beneath him in birth, and some amusing situations are the result. He suddenly comes into a fortune, and at once discards the friends of his adversity and repays his obligations by the presentation to each of his former associates of "a little cheque". But Nemesis awaits him, for it turns out that he is not the rightful heir, and his pride has a terrible fall. From this brief outline of the character, it may be judged that the part allowed ample scope for elaboration by an actor of experience and resource. Henry Irving took the utmost advantage of this opening, and London playgoers were warm in his praise. So, also, were many of his admirers in the country, for, after a long run in the metropolis, "Two Roses" was taken on tour, and in Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol, Dublin, and other places, the Digby Grant of Henry Irving was greeted with the acclamation of the public and the praise of the press. It would take several pages of this book to quote a tithe of the laudatory criticisms which Henry Irving received for his original rendering of this character. But it is necessary to cite some instances by way of showing the extraordinary effect which he created. The

Globe, after a careful description of the character said: "It is in the hands of Mr. Henry Irving; we need scarcely say more about it. As a character actor, Mr. Irving has no rival upon the English stage. His delineation of the hollow-hearted meanness, the contemptible presumption, and the disgusting hypocrisy of Digby Grant is extraordinary. The tones of the voice betray the character of the man in all its varied phases; and the whole impersonation is at once a work of art and a triumph of genius." Another critic considered the impersonation "so original in conception and so masterly in execution as to enable the artist to take rank among the very best actors on the London stage," and a third said:

"A little cheque!"
DIGBY GRANT IN "TWO ROSES".

"He is one of the best character actors on the English stage, and he derives immense advantage from the circumstance that he is able to speak the English language like an English gentleman. His Digby Grant is perfect." This chorus of praise was echoed in the provinces. In short, Henry Irving had now attained a position which removed him from the level of an intelligent, earnest, and painstaking actor. He had demonstrated that he had some force of his own which separated him from the ordinary run. He could create. He could think for himself.

"You annoy me very much."

Digby Grant in "Two Roses".

Now that he had got so far, he determined upon giving the public a proof of the real power which he felt that he possessed. This was on the two hundred and ninety-first night of "Two Roses," the occasion being his benefit. After the comedy, the author, Mr. Albery, read an address entitled "Our Secretary's Reply," and Toole once again proved his friendship, and acted Robson's celebrated character, Jacob Earwig, in "Boots at the Swan," Irving playing Frank Friskly. Before the farce, Henry Irving gave his first proof in London of his powers as a delineator of tragedy by reciting "The Dream of Eugene Aram". Since that time, thousands of people have heard the actor give this recital—if, indeed, that is the right word to use for what was in effect a magnificent piece of acting—but it is curious to see what impression he created in 1871. This is how the *Observer*, of 26th March, of that year, described this important event in the career of Henry Irving: "In other days, when the stage had a different history, and supplied other wants, it is not unnatural to suppose that an artist like Mr. Irving would have been found assisting at one of the large theatres devoted to the poetical drama and to classical English comedy. He has just the stuff in him which the great actors of whom we read must have possessed. He has appreciation, unquestionable intelligence, and that great gift of which we see so little now-a-days—power. Failing to get together for a one-night benefit the kind of assistance which would have been necessary for one of the old plays, Mr. Irving contented himself with doing what he had to do unassisted. He prepared for himself a most trying task; it was to recite Hood's poem of 'Eugene Aram,' or, rather, to act it. The difficulties attending such a task were obvious. An actor comes before the footlights in ordinary evening dress, and, without any assistance from scenery or properties, makes the audience forget the gentleman in evening dress and think only of the conscience-stricken man. This recital was nothing like a reading in the ordinary sense of the term. It was not what is commonly called a reading or a recitation. It was a vigorous and powerful bit of acting. The power of the actor soon told home. The poem is long, but Mr. Irving soon grasped his audience, and bent it at his will. The description of the murder, illustrated by action, was admirably vivid :—

Two sudden blows with a rugged stick,
And one with a heavy stone,
One hurried gash with a hasty knife,
And then the deed was done.

From this point, on went Mr. Irving sweeping along with the irresistible fury of the poem. The horror of the discovery of the dead body in the dry river bed was again a powerful dramatic point, and the tragic effect culminated in the second horror :—

As soon as the mid-day task was done,
In secret I was there,
And a mighty wind had swept the leaves,
And still the corse was bare.

Here the audience, thoroughly excited, could restrain its excitement no further, and the theatre rang with genuine and thoroughly enthusiastic applause. It was a daring experiment, but, as it turned out, thoroughly successful. It was such acting as is now seldom seen, and the thought must have struck many in the theatre whether, with our little plays and pretty sketches, our dainty realisation of every-day life, our clever sarcasms, our elegancies and sensation drama, we are not losing sight of those great passions, that tragedy of human life which it belongs to the actor to interpret."

CHAPTER VIII.

1871-1872.

A deserted theatre—The Lyceum taken in order to exploit Miss Isabel Bateman—Irving becomes a member of the company—His own story of the engagement—The failure of "Fanchette"—Alfred Jingle—A personal triumph—"The Bells"—Irving insists on its production—The manager gives way—London rings with Irving's great impersonation of Mathias—Unanimity of the Press—"Commendatory Criticisms"—The *Times* and other papers write in appreciation—"The Bells" acted for one hundred and fifty-one consecutive nights—The London verdict endorsed by the Provinces—Irving's Jeremy Diddler described.

In the year 1871, when Henry Irving was still playing Digby Grant at the Vaudeville, there was a deserted theatre which was destined to become famous for ever in the annals of the stage. This was the Lyceum, which had been in existence as a place of entertainment of one kind or another since 1772. The actual building in which Irving won so many triumphs dated from 1834. The house had an extremely chequered career, and, in 1869, it had fallen upon such evil days that there was no regular management and it was only opened at fitful intervals. In that year, the effects of the Sublime Society of Beef Steaks—the meetings of which had been held in premises adjoining the theatre and connected with the building—were sold by auction. Two comic operas were given at the Lyceum in 1870—"Chilperic" on 22nd January, and "Breaking the Spell" on the 2nd May. Both were failures, but the title of the latter piece was prophetic, for the theatre had been lying idle for over a year when an enterprising American manager, who wished to exploit his youngest daughter, took the theatre for that purpose. With that object, he gathered together a company of actors of recognised merit, including the representative of

Digby Grant whom he had seen at the Vaudeville, a visit which induced him to exclaim, "that young man should play Richelieu"—an event which came to pass, under his own management, in 1873. There have been so many versions in regard to Irving's engagement by Bateman that it may be as well to set down, once and for all, the true story, as told by Henry Irving himself. "Much against the wish of my friends, I took an engagement at the Lyceum, then under the management of Mr. Bateman. I had successfully acted in many plays, besides the 'Two Roses,' which ran three hundred nights. It was thought by everybody interested in such matters, that I ought to identify myself with what they called 'character parts'—though what that phrase means, by the way, I never could exactly understand, for I have a prejudice in the belief that every part should be a character. I always wanted to play in the higher drama. Even in my boyhood, my desire had been in that direction. When at the Vaudeville, I recited the poem of 'Eugene Aram' simply to get an idea as to whether I could impress an audience with a tragic theme. I hoped I could, and at once made up my mind to prepare myself to play characters of another type to those with which I had hitherto been associated. When Mr. Bateman engaged me, he told me that he would give me an opportunity, if he could, to play various parts, as it was to his interest, as much as mine, to discover what he thought would be successful—though, of course, never dreaming of Hamlet or of Richard the Third. Well, the Lyceum opened, but did not succeed. Mr. Bateman had lost a lot of money, and he intended giving it up. He proposed to me to go to America with him. By my advice, and against Mr. Bateman's wish, 'The Bells' was rehearsed, but he did not believe in it much. When I persuaded the manager to produce 'The Bells,' I was told there was a prejudice against that sort of romantic play. It was given to a very poor, but enthusiastic house, and from that time the theatre prospered." But we must not anticipate events.

The Lyceum opened under the Bateman management on Monday, the 11th September, 1871. The choice of play was not a good one. "Fanchette, or the Will o' the Wisp," was an adaptation made by the manager's wife, from the German, "Die Grille," which owed its origin to George Sands' story, "La Petite Fadette," a stage version of which, under the title of "The Grasshopper," had been previously seen in London. The occasion, be it remembered, was for the début before a London audience of a young actress whose sister, Miss Kate Bateman, made a great success at the Adelphi Theatre, in 1863, as Leah. This was Miss Isabel Bateman—the third of the four daughters of Colonel Bateman: Kate, Ellen, Isabella, and Frances. Henry Irving was merely a member of the company engaged to support her. The *Morning Post*, on the morning following the production, congratulated the young player on the result, "for probably no actress in modern times ever made a first appearance more auspiciously, or more satisfactorily, in every respect". Fanchette derives her nick-name from her uncanny appearance, and from the fact that she is the grandchild of a reputed witch, Mother Fadette, whose life has been blighted by the conduct of Father Barbeau, a rich farmer, who had prevented his brother from marrying her. One of old Barbeau's sons, Landry, is the beau of the village, and he falls under the spell of the little enchantress, who makes him dance with her during the entire evening, on the occasion of a festival.

Landry Barbeau was a thin and unsatisfactory part for an actor who had won distinction as the chief representative of stage villains, as the pompous Mr. Chevenix, as the proud Digby Grant, and who had thrilled a London audience by his rendering of the tragic "Dream of Eugene Aram". It was a case of making bricks without straw. Still, little as he had to do, he drew credit to himself for the earnestness and thoughtfulness of his love-making scenes, and the journal already quoted in this connection pronounced him "the best actor in romantic drama that we possess". So far, so good. But "Fanchette" was not a strong play, and the intelligent young actress was not the attraction which her father anticipated. So the piece and the actress were replaced, on 23rd October, by an adaptation of the "Pickwick Papers," with Henry Irving as Alfred Jingle. The version was by Mr. James Albery, whose reputation as a playright had been made by "Two Roses". He, no doubt, had the first Digby Grant in his mind's eye when he undertook the work, and he was criticised very strongly for his deficiencies in attempting what was really an impossible task. He was advised that he might just as reasonably have called his piece "Pickings from Pickwick," or "Pictures from Pickwick," as Pickwick, and that a better name for his work would have been "Jingle"—a suggestion that was adopted at the Lyceum, when Irving revived the piece in 1887. Pickwick became a secondary character, and there was "a remarkable composite reproduction of 'the bedroom scene' which, by the indiscreet efforts of one of the actors to heighten the effect becomes offensive to good taste and painfully uninteresting". There is no doubt—for the documentary evidence is convincing on the point—that the Alfred Jingle of Henry Irving was the hit of the performance. It is only necessary to cite two out of the dozens of the criticisms on this performance. The *Standard*, which was not prejudiced in favour of the actor, said that the full excellence of Irving's acting was more than usually distinguishable. "His grotesque, shabby-genteel appearance—the dignified serenity with which he pursued his ulterior aims—his imperturbable impudence and unflinching confidence won their way at once to the favour of the audience and thoroughly deserved the applause that greeted him in every scene and the tumultuous recall that brought him before the footlights at the close of the performance." The London critic of the Liverpool *Porcupine*—a most exacting journal—said that the actor was so identified with "the character on the first night that over and over again he turned minor stage accidents and shortcomings to account, as though they were parts of the personation. The facile hands were never quiet, the plotting eyes were always glinting, and the ready tongue was never at a loss. The actor, to use an Americanism, 'went' for the house, and as completely 'fetched' it. All the other characters were completely thrown into the shade by Jingle."

The personal triumph of an actor who had not yet risen to fame, in a sketchy part, was not expected to fill the theatre at a time when the drama was at a deplorably low ebb and theatre-going was out of fashion with the majority of the better-class patrons of the playhouse. Something of an extraordinary nature was necessary to drag the unfortunate Lyceum out of the desperate straits into which it had sunk. The resources of Mr. Bateman were almost at an end. He had tried and failed, and, after two months at the Lyceum, he thought, as we have already seen, of abandoning his scheme and returning to America. It was at this moment that Henry Irving stepped into the breach, and, with invincible belief in himself, urged upon Bateman the one thing needful to save the situation from disaster. This was the production of "The Bells," a translation of "Le Juif Polonais," which had been offered to him by one Leopold Lewis. The same person had already offered the play to Bateman, who had peremptorily refused it. This made Irving's fight all the harder. Moreover, Bateman had in his mind the popular idea of a burgomaster, and, looking at the slender figure before him, laughed in the actor's face. "You a burgomaster!" he exclaimed, in good-natured derision, and would hear no more of the subject. The resolution of the actor was not to be shaken. And fortune, for once, favoured him in his plans, but in a manner which would have caused the majority of men to hesitate and then to abandon the project. This was the announcement of another version of the same story. Irving felt that it was now or never. The most critical moment in his career had arrived and he did not falter. He took advantage of his opportunity and pressed his suit with renewed ardour. The manager, as a last resort, yielded to the earnest entreaty of the actor, and consented to give his views a trial. The piece was put into rehearsal, and Bateman went over to

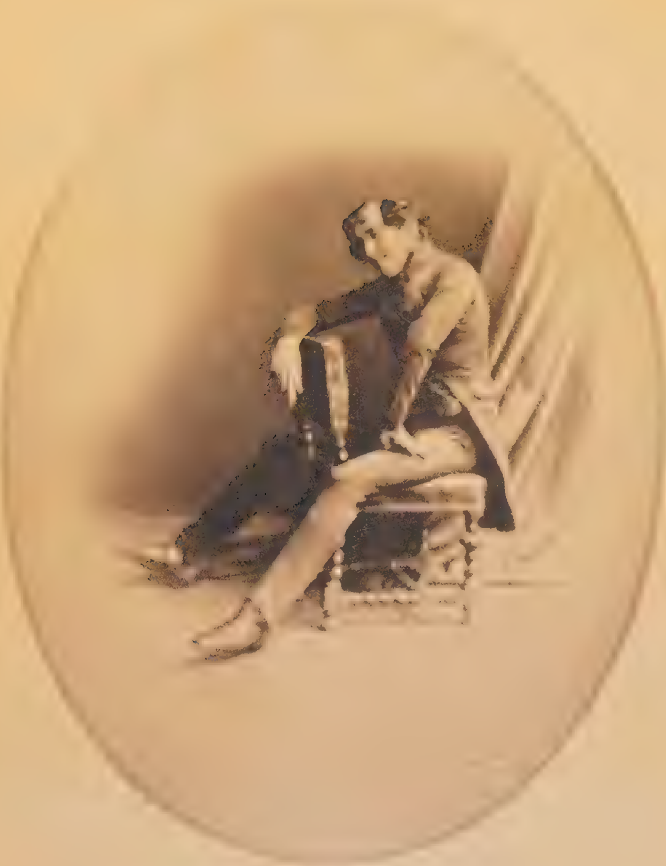


Photo: London Stereoscopic Co.

ALFRED JINGLE.

Paris, where the French play was being acted, to see if he could gain any valuable hints for the English production. The company thought that Irving was bereft of his senses, but he worked assiduously at rehearsals, and the scenery and properties were hastily prepared. In the meantime, the spirits of all concerned—save, only, those of the future Mathias—were lowered to their utmost limit by the complete failure of the rival version on its production, at the Alfred Theatre, on Monday, 13th November.[1] This failure only added to the determination of the actor to succeed in his cherished idea. "The Bells" was produced on Saturday, 25th November, 1871. Irving's performance of Mathias electrified the audience. The spectators on this auspicious occasion were few and they had come in a spirit of boredom. Henry Irving beat down their coldness and reserve, the theatre re-echoed with such applause as had not been heard within its walls for many years, and, by the Monday morning, all play-going London was aware that a great personality and a great actor had come into his hard-won kingdom.

He had fought for over fifteen years with London as the goal of his ambition, and the struggle, long, anxious, and absolutely unparalleled in the history of the stage, had been won. It had been won, fairly and squarely, without any social or any other influence, without money, and, as we have seen, in the face of prejudice and managerial opposition. To do Colonel Bateman justice, it is only fair to say that, having once given way in regard to "The Bells," he did all that lay within his power for the production. The company was a capable one, and the scenery was, for those days, so good that its excellence was commented on in the press. He also brought over from Paris a conductor who was thoroughly acquainted with the music of the play—a great assistance. In order thoroughly to appreciate the surrounding circumstances, it should be noted that "The Bells" was only one item in what would be called nowadays "a triple bill". The "star" of the company was a comedian, George Belmore, who began the proceedings with the farce, "My Turn Next," and also appeared in the last piece, "Pickwick," the actors in which were announced in this order: George Belmore, Henry Irving, and E. P. Addison. It will be observed that Irving, despite his success as Jingle, was still playing second fiddle to the elder actor. "The Bells" changed all that, though not at once. In order to fill his house, and save his pocket, the clever Colonel adopted a novel plan in regard to the opinions of the press. It would have required several columns to have published anything like the complete, and favourable, comments. So he had a two-inch advertisement, headed with "The Bells," and "Mr. Henry Irving," in capitals, followed by this announcement: "The Press has, with startling unanimity, expressed so favourable an opinion of the new drama, 'The Bells,' and also of the marvellous acting of Mr. Henry Irving in the character of Mathias, that the management would desire to publish in the form of an advertisement the whole of the notices. This, however, being impossible, Mr. Bateman cannot do less, in acknowledgment of these opinions, than to enumerate the papers which have contained such unprecedented commendatory criticisms." The manager then gave a list, printed in capitals, in double-column, of the forty-one London newspapers which had extended such an enthusiastic welcome to the creator of Mathias—for Henry Irving was, in the French sense, at least, the creator of the character. Of this, however, more anon. The papers cited by Mr. Bateman for their "commendatory criticisms" of Irving as Mathias were the following:—

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[1] It was called "Paul Zegers, or, The Dream of Retribution" and was announced as "a new and original drama," by F. C. Burnand. The burgomaster was taken by an actor whose name is now unknown. The Royal Alfred Theatre had a varied history, under several names—the Marylebone and West London, as well as Alfred.

Athenæum
Army and Navy Gazette
Bell's Life
Civil Service Gazette
Court Journal
Daily News
Daily Telegraph
Examiner
Echo
Era
Figaro
Fun

Globe
Graphic
Hornet
Illustrated London News
Illustrated Times
Illustrated Newspaper
John Bull
Judy
Lloyd's
Morning Post
Morning Advertiser
News of the World
Observer
Orchestra
Pall Mall Gazette
Punch
Queen
Reynolds'
Shipping Gazette
Sporting Life
Sportsman
Standard
Sun and Central Press
Sunday Times
Times
Vanity Fair
Weekly Dispatch
Weekly Times
Westminster Papers

It is not generally known, although the critics of 1871 were well aware of the state of the case, that there is a great difference between "The Bells," as played by Henry Irving, and the original work by Émile Erckmann and Alexandre Chatrian. This was intended to be "une simple étude dramatique écrite sans aucune préoccupation du théâtre". The French theatrical managers saw the possibilities of "Le Juif Polonais" on the stage, and it was produced at the Théâtre Cluny in 1869. The original Mathias of the French stage, Talien, and his French successors, the elder Coquelin and M. Got, made the part that of a prosperous, somewhat easy-going Alsatian, whose fears are not very intense, and whose death, in accordance with the views of the authors, is attributed to too much white wine. This is the more faithful rendering of the part, strictly speaking, but a typical, commonplace burgomaster would not have been acceptable to the English public, and it is not difficult to see why no one had any faith whatever in "The Bells" beyond Henry Irving. The manager, as we know, produced it against his will, having first refused to do so and having laughed in Irving's face at the absurdity of the thing. Even when the piece was being rehearsed, Irving's fellow players looked at him askance. The failure of the version at the Alfred Theatre was, to all but one member of the Lyceum company, a depressing incident; it only stimulated Irving to his highest endeavour. "Paul Zegers" was more an adaptation, than a translation, of the French work. It had a prologue and it conformed largely to the accepted idea of a stage play. It treated the story as a dream, and ended happily. The version which had been offered to Irving was by a Bohemian of the old, and now defunct, school of men who preferred to do hack work for the theatres rather than attend to the business into which they had entered. Leopold Lewis had been a solicitor, but he abandoned law for the pen of the playwright. His version of "Le Juif Polonais" is, in general, little more than a translation of the original, which is in dialogue. But he altered the end, and he varied the termination of the first act. In the original, a chance visitor, dressed like a Polish Jew, comes to the door of the inn, and Mathias, excited by the visions conjured up by the talk about the mesmerist, falls down in a fit and the act terminates as Heinrich calls for the doctor.[1] The adaptor was criticised in some quarters for this drastic change, it being held that the author wished to keep the audience in suspense as to their knowledge of Mathias being a murderer or not. This treatment applies to a book, but long experience has proved that the Lyceum version of the incident—a vision seen by Mathias of the actual murder—is extremely effective. So it proved on the memorable night of 25th, November, 1871.

Mathias was the turning point in Irving's career. He literally awoke to find himself famous. The newspapers, as we have seen from the managerial pronouncement, united in a chorus of praise. The leading authority in dramatic criticism in London, the *Times*, while recalling Irving's service as "a valuable actor, especially of bad men in good society," regarded his appearance as a tragic artist as a début. Having given a detailed description of the story, it continued: "It will be obvious to every reader that the efficiency of this singular play depends almost wholly upon the actor who represents Mathias. To this one part all the others are subordinate, and while it is most grateful to an artist who can appreciate and grapple with its difficulties, it would altogether crush an aspirant whose ambition was disproportionate to his talents; but, remarkable for the strength of his physique, Mr. H. Irving has thrown the whole force of his mind into the character, and works out bit by bit the concluding hours of a life passed in a constant effort to preserve a cheerful exterior, with a conscience tortured till it has become a monomania. It is a marked peculiarity of the moral position of Mathias that he has no confidant, that he is not subject to the extortions of some mercenary wretch who would profit by his knowledge. He is at once in two worlds, between which there is no link—an outer world which is ever smiling, an inner world which is a purgatory. Hence a dreaminess in his manner, which Mr. Irving accurately represents in his frequent transitions from a display of the domestic affections to the fearful work of self-communion. In the dream, his position is changed. The outer world is gone, and conscience is all-triumphant, assisted by an imagination which violently brings together the anticipated terrors of a criminal court and the mesmeric feats he has recently witnessed. The struggle of the miserable culprit, convinced that all is lost, but desperately fighting against hope, rebelling against the judges, protesting against the clairvoyant, who wrings his secret from him, are depicted by Mr. Irving with a degree of energy

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[1] "Le médecin . . . courez chercher le médecin."

THE BELLS.

First acted at the Lyceum, 25th November, 1871.

Mathias - - - - -	Mr. Henry Irving.
Walter - - - - -	Mr. Frank Hall.
Hans - - - - - -	Mr. F. W. Irish.
Christian - - - - -	Mr. H. Crellin.
Mesmerist - - - -	Mr. A. Tapping.
Doctor Zimmer - - -	Mr. Dyas.
Notary - - - - -	Mr. Collett.
Tony - - - - -	Mr. Fredericks.
Fritz - - - - - -	Mr. Fotheringham.
Judge of the Court - - -	Mr. Gaston Murray.
Clerk of the Court - - -	Mr. Branscombe.
Catherine - - - - -	Miss G. Pauncefort.
Annette - - - - -	Miss Fanny Heywood.
Sozel - - - - - -	Miss Helen Mayne.

Act I. The Burgomaster's Inn at Alsace. Act II. Best Room in the Burgomaster's House. Act III. Bedroom in the Burgomaster's House. Vision, the Court. Period, Alsace, 1833.

that, fully realising the horror of the situation, seems to hold the audience in suspense. On Saturday, it was not till the curtain fell, and they summoned the actor before it with a storm of acclamation, that they seemed to recover their self-possession. Nevertheless, so painful is the interest of the scene that, notwithstanding the excellent manner in which it is played, we would suggest its reduction to a smaller compass."

To hold an audience spell-bound, as Irving did on the first night of Mathias, for a full twenty minutes in the last act, was a remarkable triumph for the actor whose greatest success hitherto had been the stilted Digby Grant. The scene, no doubt, was extremely harrowing at all times, and then it was in strong contrast to the theatrical fare of the day, which consisted for the most part of cheap melodrama, milk and-water comedies, and inane burlesques. The death scene was also thought to be too agonising. But there was praise in more than the forty odd papers enumerated by the manager who, thanks to his having taken the advice of the actor, now found himself with restored fortunes. One of the most thoughtful critics of that period was Dutton Cook. He was then writing in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He was, despite a certain sympathy with the serious side of the actor's work, rather cold in style and measured in his praise. His verdict on the first performance of "The Bells" is, therefore, all the more interesting. He commended the vision in which the murdered man is seen sitting in the sledge, with Mathias crouching behind, axe in hand, as he thought the figure of the second Jew in the original a disturbing element. The play, he says, "was listened to with the most breathless attention, and extraordinary applause followed the fall of the curtain. How far it may secure enduring success remains, of course, to be seen. Our audiences have been so long accustomed to flimsy exhibitions upon the stage, that they have perhaps forgotten that the British drama once possessed a robust constitution that did not shrink upon occasion from the distressing or even the appalling. In any case, this tragic story of Alsace is well worth seeing, not merely for itself, but for the remarkable power displayed by Mr. Irving in the part of the burgomaster. Acting at once so intelligent and so intense has not been seen on the London stage for many years. The earlier scenes may lack repose somewhat, and the vision of the trial is certainly protracted unduly, but the actor is thoroughly possessed by his part, and depicts its agonising fear and passionate despair with real artistic force."

There was a remarkable unanimity among the critics, not only in regard to Irving's impersonation, but in regard to the length of the trial scene. This, however, was never altered, as it was found that the spectators in front of the curtain liked its intensity. It would be easy to fill many pages of this book by giving examples of the highly favourable criticisms bestowed upon this first performance by Henry Irving of the character of Mathias. Such a proceeding, however, is unnecessary, for all the notices were of a kind. The *Athenæum*, indeed, blamed the actor for not following in the footsteps of the original exponent of the part, who made Mathias, in the early scenes, a bright, cheery man giving way under depression to the agony of fear and self-accusation. It also thought him "much too youthful in appearance for the character". Having said so much, it affirmed that, in the stronger situations, the actor had "a ghastly power not easy to surpass. There is no question," it continued, "that the man who could give such portraiture as Mr. Irving afforded of the conflict of emotion and passion has histrionic power of the rarest kind." This was praise indeed. Such expressions as "marvellously fine," "nothing finer has been seen for years," "a masterly performance," "great acting," "histrionic power such as is rarely seen upon the modern English stage," and so forth, appeared over and over again during the first week of the run at the Lyceum. Irving's tragic impersonation captivated the critics, as well as the audience, by its intelligence and its intensity. Several papers also gave the manager sound advice in reference to overworking the creator of Mathias. "Unless Mr. Bateman desires to lose the services of a valuable actor," said the *Observer* on 26th November, "he will soon make some arrangement whereby Mr. Irving is relieved of the double duty of Mathias and Jingle. It is a pity to over-drive a willing horse, or to allow the horse to be overdriven." Another journal of weight said that "'The Bells' should ring in crowded audiences for many nights to come, and soon silence the jingle of such a theatrical atrocity as 'Pickwick'." *Punch*, also, had something to say on the subject. In concluding a laudatory notice, it said: "'Pickwick' finishes the entertainment at the Lyceum. Mr. Irving plays Jingle. This, after Mathias, is an incongruity. It looks like Kean 'afterwards Clown'. We hear that some one else is to take this part in future; perhaps the change has already been made. In any case, we prefer to see Mr. Irving play the *Bells* without the *Jingle*." For business reasons, no doubt, this advice was not taken, and Irving continued to play both parts for four months; and, when a change was made, Irving acted Jeremy Diddler instead of Jingle. In fairness to the memory of Mr. Bateman, it should be stated that the drama was excellently mounted on its first production. There is no opportunity for scenic display in "The Bells," but everything that was possible was done to give a faithful representation of Alsatian life. Dutton Cook found the costumes, stage-fittings, and scenery "of a most liberal and costly nature. The mechanical contrivances are perfect." The *Standard* wrote: "Nothing can be better than the careful manner in which" the drama "has been put upon the stage. The scenery and the mechanical effects are really excellent." There are various other allusions in the contemporary press which show that the scenery, for which Mr. Hawes Craven was chiefly responsible, was excellent of its kind—if it did come to grief after twelve years of use, many railway journeys, and an ocean voyage, there is nothing much to be wondered at in the circumstance. Once the American manager had pledged himself to the production of the play, he did his best for it. Not only did he give it

Photo: London Stereoscopic Co.

MATHIAS.

proper mounting, but as previously related, he brought over M. Singla, the leader of the orchestra at the Théâtre Cluny, who had arranged the characteristic music of the play, and the company supporting Henry Irving in his first tragic essay in London was a thoroughly competent one. Bateman did his best in all these respects.

To Irving, however, and to no one else, belongs the initial credit for the representation of the drama. If it had not been for his indomitable will, his persuasive powers, and his profound faith in himself, "The Bells" would never have been seen at the Lyceum or anywhere else. And, the opportunity once gone, it would have been many more weary years ere the actor could have got a similar opening. As it was, he had risen, at a single step, and ere he was thirty-four years of age, to a popularity which never abated during his future career, a popularity which lasted from 1871 to 1905—a proud record which has no equal in the history of the great actors of the English stage. In regard to the means by which he first attained fame in the character, it is only necessary—leaving aside, for the moment, his other qualifications—to allude to his originality. He created Mathias. His impersonation of that character differed, not only from the French interpreters of the part, but from the original burgomaster of Erckmann-Chatrian. This capacity for thinking for himself was one of his greatest gifts. It was evident in all his work. Although he had, on the stage, to interpret the words of others, he was always original. This quality in his acting was strongly in evidence in his Mathias. In one of his earliest addresses on the art of the actor, he alluded to the originality which entitled certain members of his profession to be considered as creators. He claimed, for the properly-equipped actor, that "his favourite traditions have been arrived at long ago by the study and practice of trained intellects, and that the tracks he treads have been marked out with the best available skill and judgment, and are the survivals of a process by which the stage is constantly effacing, by disuse, the mistakes of former times. I am the last man to admire a slavish or even an unthinking adherence to the interpretations and conceptions of traditions. My own conviction is that there are few characters or passages of our great dramatists which will not repay original study. . . . There is a natural dramatic fertility in every one who has the smallest histrionic gift; so that, as soon as he knows the author's text and obtains self-possession, and feels at home in a part without being too familiar with it, the mere automatic action of rehearsing and playing it at once begins to place the author in new lights and to give the passage being played an individuality partly independent of, and yet consistent with, and rendering more powerfully visible, the dramatist's conception. It is the vast power a good actor has in this way which has led the French to speak of creating a part when they mean its being first played; and French authors are so conscious of the extent and value of this co-operation of actors with them that they have never objected to the phrase, but, on the contrary, are uniformly lavish in their homage to the artists who have created on the boards the parts which they themselves have created on paper." It can hardly be contended that the conscience-haunted murderer of Erckmann-Chatrian is a great conception, but Mathias was made a great character by Henry Irving's interpretation.

So attractive was "The Bells" during its first season at the Lyceum that it was played one hundred and fifty-one consecutive times. Not only did it fill the popular parts of the house, but it drew all literary and artistic London to Wellington Street. Among the many judges of the highest work in dramatic art who felt the power for good possessed by the new actor was the Earl of Lytton, then in his sixty-ninth year. The author of "The Lady of Lyons" and "Richelieu" wrote that Irving's personation "was too admirable not to be appreciated by every competent judge of art. It will," he continued, "be a sure good fortune to any dramatic author to obtain his representation in some leading part worthy of his study and suited to his powers." The actor was always proud of the compliment paid to him at this early stage of his

London career by Mrs. Sartoris (Miss Adelaide Kemble),[1] who said that he reminded her of the most famous members of her family. She begged him, with great earnestness, to devote himself to the higher walks of the drama. Despite this artistic, and enormously popular, success, Henry Irving was still playing in another piece as well as in "The Bells" in 1872—for, in March of that year, "Pickwick" was replaced by "Raising the Wind". This old farce by James Kenney—it had been first produced at Covent Garden in 1803, with "Gentleman" Lewis[2] as Jeremy Diddler, the character now taken by the creator of Mathias—was certainly an antidote to the horrors of "The Bells," for Irving's acting kept the audience in roars of laughter. It was played until the last night of the season, 17th May, 1872.

The natural result of the great excitement caused by Irving's fascinating acting in "The Bells" was a tour of the principal towns in the provinces, where he was received with extraordinary enthusiasm. Some of the highest praise awarded to him was in places where he had acted in less happy days. His impersonation was received in Manchester with great appreciation. The *Courier* found that, as Mathias, he reached a height of artistic excellence such as had not, in living memory, "been approached by any other actor. . . . It is impossible to say that any one of Mr. Irving's scenes is over-done, and it is worth while to contemplate the profundity with which all have been conceived and the terrible truthfulness with which they are interpreted. . . . It will be gathered from these remarks that 'The Bells,' if not a pleasing drama in the ordinary acceptation of the term, supplies a medium whereby a powerful actor is enabled to present a terrible view of the consequences inseparable from the worst of crimes, and the excellence of Mr. Irving's acting becomes apparent only as the spectator is able to enter into his views of the character, and to estimate the skill with which it is presented. We are ourselves fully impressed with the belief that Mr. Irving has in this extraordinary rôle accomplished a triumph in his art, the result of which will be recognised hereafter in displays more congenial it may be to recognised taste, but not less powerful in design and realisation." But the greatest praise came from Liverpool, where he played Mathias for three weeks in the month of June, acting, in addition, Jingle during the first six nights, and Jeremy Diddler during the last week. He was rewarded in all the local papers with full, critical, and most appreciative criticisms. In fact, the Liverpool critics vied with each other in giving recognition to his work. The morning journals had reviews which were as exhaustive as intelligent, the *Daily Post* and the *Courier* each giving a column of careful criticism. It is impossible, on account of their length, to cite more than a representative example from each notice.

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[1] Younger daughter of Charles Kemble (1775-1854), a famous Falstaff and Mercutio, and niece of John Philip Kemble (1757-1823), the great actor of the classical, or declamatory, school. Her sister, Frances Anne, "Fanny" (1809-1893), afterwards Mrs. Butler, was famous as Mrs. Haller, Lady Macbeth, Constance, Portia, Queen Katherine, etc. Mrs. Sartoris died in 1879, at the age of sixty-five.

[2] William Thomas Lewis (1748-1811). The original Doricourt and Faulkland, as well as Jeremy Diddler; deputy manager of Covent Garden, 1782-1804; lessee of the Liverpool theatre, 1803, until his death. Played a large number of comedy parts.

The fame of Irving's great performance in "The Bells" having preceded him, he would have been honoured on this account alone by the remarkable demonstration "which greeted him when he came on the stage," said the *Daily Post*, "even if he had not been one of the most popular actors by whom Liverpool is visited. He was destined, however, to enjoy more conspicuous and unmistakable marks of success. After each act he was recalled, and after two of the three he had to appear a second time, so great was the enthusiasm of the audience. This honour, rarely paid to an actor"—for calls in those days were hardly earned and seldom granted—"was the reward and due of a piece of tragedy almost unique in these times, and scarcely excelled in any past triumphs of the stage. Comparisons are of all things most odious to artists, and we will, therefore, only say in general terms that in marvellous intensity and vividness, and in the powerful abandon with which the tragedian's conception is carried out, only one or two performances at most which are known to this generation are worthy to be placed beside Mr. Irving's Mathias. Though a young man, this already famous actor has had a considerable experience of theatrical travel. In no town would he find a readier predisposition to believe in his achievements than in Liverpool. Even those, however, who were not astonished by the singular excellence of his performance in the 'Two Roses' must have been astounded by the representation which they witnessed last night—a representation by which with a single wild spring Mr. Irving has leaped into the highest place among tragic actors." This was only the commencement of a long article which gave a fine description of the play and awarded unstinted praise to its chief interpreter. The *Courier* could not find words with which to praise sufficiently this "masterpiece of psychological insight and accurate expression. What Lessing says of Shakespeare may be said of Mr. Irving's Mathias, with this modification, of course, that what the great poet accomplished many times, the actor has yet achieved only once: 'He gives a living picture of all the most minute and secret artifices by which a feeling steals into our souls, of all the imperceptible advantages which it there gains, of all the stratagems by which every other passion is made subservient to it, till it becomes the sole tyrant of our desires and our aversions'. The court scene of the third act is an epitome of this power—first the prompting to the deed of violence, then its perpetration, and finally the whirlwind harvest which comes in due season. This act alone is enough to stamp Mr. Irving a great actor. Such a piece of art does not come by inspiration: it is a carefully studied part, prepared with elaborate attention to detail, blended harmoniously in all its incidents, and controlled from first to last by a true knowledge of the feelings and actions which such a situation would create. There is nothing false to nature or art in the impersonation of that overpowering wretchedness of woe. . . . We might speak of the earlier portions of the drama, and find points of commendation, but the dream is the natural climax of the piece, alike in acting and construction. It is the portion which brings into strongest relief Mr. Irving's powers, which are of high order in conception and expression. His countenance is a mirror of the soul; every changing form of word and feeling is written on his face, whose mobility and expressiveness are wonderful."

From Mathias to Jeremy Diddler was a vast change, the greater as it occurred on the same evening, a circumstance of which the Liverpool press took due note. The *Journal* published a long essay on the part and Irving's interpretation: "The distinguishing merit of his performance," it said, "is that, by making Jeremy a thorough 'character part,' he renders intelligible and interesting the dramatic and personal consistency of the more beggarly with the more gentlemanly phase of this queer adventurer. In doing this Mr. Irving has availed himself to the utmost of the assistance of dress." After a learned disquisition on the subject of costume, the article proceeds: "Mr. Irving seizes the right notion in aiming at the strong development of Diddler's character as a wildly peculiar adventurer. He puts together short sight, fidgetty gait, intense coolness when doing most daring things, great readiness and magnificence of language, endless fertility in practical jokes and constant forgetfulness that his pockets are full of stolen provisions; and with these he makes one of the most extraordinary pictures ever conceived. A mere swindler he is not. He is a genius in impetuous and reckless social adventure. To conceive such a man being endured for an instant in any one's house, you must imagine him to be so strange and fascinating an eccentric that no one can quite believe him to be a swindler, and this is just the fellow that Mr. Irving represents with great address and abundant inventiveness. The most humourous bit of action is the perpetual throwing open of other people's coats. The artistic way that Mr. Irving does this—surveying the frontispiece of every man's costume with the eye of a 'connoisseur,' approaching it, touching it, trying it, and, finally, with a dexterous touch, throwing the coat open and leaving the waistcoat bare, producing as many various pictures as there are subjects for the operation—is intensely funny. Why, it would be difficult to say. The problem would have to be referred to the philosopher, Herbert Spencer, who wrote a chapter on the reason why we laugh at a baby with a man's hat on. But of the fact there is no doubt. The trick seems more laughable every time Mr. Irving plays it."

CHAPTER IX.

1872-1873.

"Charles the First" produced—"A very awkward lump in the throat" for the *Standard*—Controversy about the character of Cromwell—Irving's impersonation of the king extolled on all sides—The author's defence—The play published—The *Spectator* eulogises Irving's impersonation—The Prince and Princess of Wales witness "Charles the First"—Extraordinary scenes in consequence—Irving appears as Eugene Aram—Another personal success—More critical eulogy—Especially from the *Spectator*—End of Irving's second season at the Lyceum—Remarkable enthusiasm—Plays "Charles the First" on tour.

THE instantaneous and pronounced popular and artistic success made by Henry Irving in "The Bells" placed the actor in a proud, an interesting, and yet a singularly difficult, position. He had leaped into fame, and although he was not yet hailed as the regenerator of the stage, it was felt that the drama had now, not only an earnest student of its most serious side, but an exponent of it who might reach the highest limits of his art. The power to dominate and thrill the playgoer, not only of London, but the provinces, had been amply demonstrated. And this power, to the extent which Irving possessed, and exercised it, is the gift of only one man in several generations. But the purely psychological study of Mathias was hardly, to many minds, the proper prelude to the dignity of the "Royal Martyr," no matter how the character of Charles the First might be depicted by the dramatist. A man who had murdered for greed of gold, and had become so conscious-stricken that the sound of sleigh-bells paralysed his senses, was a curious way of approaching the dignity of the traditional King. London theatre-goers and critics still thought of Irving as an impersonator of bad and disagreeable men in general and of villains in particular. They had no knowledge of the versatility which he had displayed in his earlier days on the stage. If Londoners had known that he had acted Claude Melnotte, they would have smiled at the bare idea. As for Hamlet—well, yes, he might have experimented in the part for a joke, on the occasion of his benefit—for actors were allowed full licence to play any pranks which pleased them on such a night. The idea was not to be taken seriously. Yet, in two years from this period, he was to begin, at the Lyceum, a series of representations of Hamlet which has never been approached in the history of the tragedy. On 28th September, 1872, the idea of his acting "Charles the First" was not inspiring, even to his many friends among the public. Up to that time, the "unhappy king" was unknown as a stage figure, and there was as much curiosity to see how W. G. Wills had treated the subject as there was in regard to the interpretation of the character by the new actor. As for the play, its domestic nature soon touched the audience, and the pathetic personation of the king completed the alluring picture. The majority of the spectators were in tears at more than one part of the play, and the final scene reduced the entire house to weeping. Even the stolid *Standard* had to "confess to a very awkward lump in the throat about this time," and another sober-minded journal opined that "those who love what the ladies call 'a good cry' cannot do better than hurry off to the Lyceum with a goodly supply of pocket-handkerchiefs". This is a common-place kind of comment, but it suggests the thought that many, many thousands of people must have wept over this beautiful scene—it has touched the hearts of all who witnessed it in London, in the country, in America. Henry Irving never failed in it, and he acted it, with exquisite pathos, until the end of his career.

Had Mr. Bateman been so minded, he could now have published the names of a longer list of papers which gave favourable notices than in the case of "The Bells". Again, the praise was more for the actor than the play. The critics fell foul of the author for his treatment of the character of Cromwell, but this was all to the advantage of the theatre, for it was so much cheap advertisement. The extraordinary scene in the last act in which Cromwell hints that he will befriend the king, provided that the earldom of Essex may descend to him, excited much discussion, as well it might. Mr. Wills availed himself to the fullest extent of the "poet's licence," and he caused it to be stated on the programme that "the author feels it to be unnecessary to confess or enumerate certain historical inaccuracies as to period and place which have arisen from sheer dramatic necessity, and are justified, he believes, by the highest precedent". The author defended himself most vigorously, and he wrote a long "justification" of his action to the *Morning Post*, beginning with the reflection that "the character of Cromwell may bear a little good-humoured discussion without alarming his most jealous admirers". In regard to the "obnoxious interview" between the king and Cromwell, "I have only endeavoured to paint the humble yet influential burgess of Cambridge—not the Protector; whose sagacity was in effect almost equivalent to principle and whose outrageous despotism grew to a sort of grandeur". He also pointed out a somewhat obvious fact—"the play is of Charles, and not of Cromwell". This discussion, which anticipated the methods of modern days, did no harm to the popularity of the piece, although that was secured by the impersonation of the king. The drama drew crowded

CHARLES THE FIRST.

First acted at the Lyceum on 28th September, 1872.

Charles I. - - -	Mr. Henry Irving.
Oliver Cromwell - -	Mr. George Belmore.
Marquis of Huntley -	Mr. Addison.
Lord Moray - - -	Mr. Edgar.
Ireton - - - -	Mr. Markby.
Pages - - - -	Misses E. Mayne and J. Henri.
Princess Elizabeth - -	Miss Willa Brown.
Prince James - - -	Miss Allcroft.
Prince Henry - - -	Miss Welch.
Lady Eleanor Davys -	Miss G. Pauncefort.
Queen Henrietta Maria -	Miss Isabel Bateman.

Act I. Gardens at Hampton Court. Act II. The King's Cabinet at Whitehall. Act III. The Scottish Camp at Newark. Act IV. Whitehall, at Daybreak.

houses for eight months, or, to speak with perfect accuracy, for one hundred and eighty nights—a remarkable record for a poetical and a sad piece. After the first performance, there was an enthusiastic call for the author. "Mr. Irving explained that he was not in the house, and promised to convey to him the cordial reception given to his noble play"—an expression which he so frequently applied, in after years, to "Becket".

Soon after the production, the "historical tragedy," as it was called by its author, was published by the firm of William Blackwood and Sons, at half a crown—a tribute to the literary interest of the piece. In his introduction to the book, the editor called attention to the low state into which the stage had fallen and from which it was being rescued: "The first emancipation of the modern English stage from the French stage was effected by the means of short original comedies, in which the transient habits of this country were, with more or less accuracy, portrayed. But even those who rejoiced in the moderate reform thus far carried out refused to believe that it tended towards the revival of a drama at once national and poetical. The English drawing-room and the English croquet-ground might indeed be exhibited with all their details, and fine ladies and gentlemen figuring therein might indulge in good English repartee. But as far as tragic drama, or anything that approached it, that had gone for ever. Under these circumstances, it was but natural that the production of 'Charles the First' at the Lyceum Theatre took every one by surprise. An historical tragedy, it had been received not with cold approbation—had attained not what our neighbours call a 'succès d'estime'—but it had evidently appealed to the sympathies of the public more strongly than any new poetical work brought out within the memory of living men. People not generally used to the melting mood felt themselves compelled to shed tears, not over the woes of some half-comic paterfamilias in a domestic tale, but over the sorrows of a king who perished considerably more than two centuries ago. . . . When the appearance of a new author is simultaneous with the rise of an actor who can give reality to his imaginings, the coincidence is most felicitous. The chroniclers of our stage still dwell on the good fortune of William Shakespeare in being the contemporary of Richard Burbage. It is not the least merit of Mr. Wills that he has created a character which has first allowed full development to the genius of Mr. Henry Irving." The compliment thus paid to Mr. Wills's interpreter was much more richly deserved than in the case of his predecessor.

For "Charles the First," although it contains many exquisite passages and many lines of poetic feeling and literary elegance, is a succession of isolated tableaux rather than a play. It depends entirely on the impersonation of the king for its popular success. A good company and adequate scenery are useful adjuncts, but the part of Charles and the player thereof are so interwoven that they are one. If the actor fails, then the play must go to the wall. But Henry Irving did not fail either in 1872 or on any other occasion when he acted this part. His first performance of this character received even a warmer welcome than that with which Mathias was greeted. There was nothing terrorising, as in the case of "The Bells," either in the play or the performance. The death scene was dignified and infinitely pathetic, a great contrast to the horror of that of Mathias. The faithful chronicler is embarrassed in looking over the contemporary criticisms of this performance. Of all the notices which appeared at that time—there were long articles in all the daily and weekly papers of value—the most illuminating, perhaps, was that in the *Spectator*, which published a most discriminating essay on the subject. Where all are so good, from every point of view, it is a little difficult to select the right criticism, but the paper in question represented the case quite fairly. It took the author to task for his historical inaccuracies and rated him for the abuse of what he called the "sheer dramatic necessity" of the moment. Having stated its own views on this point, it described the performance, dwelling mainly upon the chief character as "personated by Mr. Irving, who looks as if he had stepped off the canvas, now of Rubens anon of Vandyck—a magnanimous, gallant, chivalrous, right royal king, loving to his people, faithful to his friends, pious and patriotic, passionately devoted to his wife and children, as firmly attached to his duties as to his rights. Accepting this utterly unhistorical picture, we follow Mr. Irving's impersonation with the interest and admiration it is calculated to inspire, through several scenes of unequal, but always considerable merit. The garden scene at Hampton Court is very impressive. The peacefulness of its familiar beauty, contemplated for a little, while the stage is yet empty, awakens exactly the yearning, remonstrating regret for the foreknown interruption of its peace, the ruin of its old traditions, which ought to be aroused before the monarch, fresh from the arbitrary exercise of power which ruptured the sacred pact between King and Commons, enters, in the black-satin suit, graceful cloak, and rich collar and ruffles of Spanish lace, with the long rippling, pale brown hair, the peaked beard, and the doomed look so familiar to us all. The effect of Mr. Irving's entrance as the king with the royal children, who are dressed from Vandyck's family group, is perfect. The scene with the children is quite beautiful. The King throws off his weariness and depression, and plays with them, repeating the ballad of King Lear—while his wife impatiently urges him to attend to his business—with exquisite natural tenderness and sweetness, talking to them with little touches in the dialogue which do great credit to the author and his interpreter. Very fine, too, is the king's interview with Huntley, who has brought him bad news, and offers him good advice. There is a great deal of genuinely good writing in this dialogue, and the king's lament for the change which has come over the relations between sovereign and people, holding them so far apart, is noteworthy, and very finely delivered. . . . Mr. Wills's Charles is perpetually hugging Henrietta Maria in everybody's presence, and it is not the least significant of the many proofs of Mr. Irving's consummate art, that the audience takes these proceedings quite gravely. Not a titter from the gallery turns this 'business' into the ridiculous, and this is not because the audience is deeply impressed by the intrinsic solemnity of the piece, for they laugh unhesitatingly at an awful crisis, when the little Duke of York makes the historic reply to his father's solemn injunction, in a shrill, pretty, piping cry. It is because Mr. Irving's acting is so fine that the escape from the absurd, though narrow, is complete.

"Here we have Charles, full of love for his wife, and of consideration for her, alive to the growing dislike and distrust of her in the public mind, so swayed by it, that he offends her by the dismissal of her suite, and gravely warns her against the lightest indiscretion. The same chivalrous devotion characterises him in the second act; and in the third, when he is betrayed and sold by the Scottish lords and taken prisoner by Cromwell at Newark, his passionate pleading for the fulfilment of Moray's promise, the grandeur and pathos of his address to the traitor, are equalled by the intensity of his solicitude for his wife, and the anguish of his regret for his friends. The words which Aytoun puts into the mouth of Charles's grandson:—

> Oh, the brave, the noble-hearted,
> Who have died in vain for me!

come to one's mind with the mere look of the wan face, and the burning woeful eyes. So far, the framework of history has been preserved sufficiently to keep this fancy portrait of the King from distortion. But how does it come out in the fourth act, in which we have to test the validity of Mr. Wills's plea of 'dramatic necessity' by either of its possible meanings? The Queen has returned to England, comes to Whitehall, has a fruitless interview with Cromwell on the morning of the day fixed for the execution of Charles, is present at the famous parting between him and his children, on which ensues a solemn, agonising, farewell scene between the wretched husband and wife, and Charles goes out to the scaffold, his last word being the historic 'remember'. We freely grant that the closing scene is beautiful, but we believe that the real closing scene was infinitely more so, and that Mr. Wills has lost dramatic effect by the change, besides having destroyed the unity of his great central character. Let it be said at once that what Mr. Irving has to represent, he represents to absolute perfection; that the farewell scene with the children is so dreadfully, so agonisingly pathetic, so simply beautiful, that it is hardly bearable; and that the pictorial effect of the farewell to the wife is wonderfully fine. As she stands in his arms, the King's hands grasp the Queen's head, bending it backwards with fingers sunken in the hair upon the temples, and his eyes devour her face with greedy love, and grief, in which the joy of the past, the anguish of the present, the reluctant dread of the future are all visible. But Charles is going to die, she has to live; he is leaving her hated by the people as he never was, the foreign papist woman made a pretext by his enemies throughout (and more strongly insisted on in that light in the play than in history), quite defenceless, with the tradition of murder in her own country and in his, to quicken his sensibilities now slumbering for the first time, as to her fate. His beautiful, touching, eloquent address to her, full of exquisitely subtle traits, might have been spoken had he been leaving her in perfect security, to the indulgence of the grief he covets, for whose continuance, in softened form of sweet memory, he prays in words and tones which wring the heart."

The play and its interpretation drew the town from the very first. On the morning after the production, the *Observer* declared that "the public will hurry to the Lyceum when Mr. Irving's last and incomparably best performance gets noised abroad. The actor took us all by surprise. We had known him as a first-rate character actor, and as a terrible impersonator of ghastly and terrible scenes. We remember well his Digby Grant, his Mr. Chevenix, and his Mathias, and some fancied either the necessary mannerisms of one set of characters, or the superhuman efforts required for others, would to a certain extent mar his style. Never was a greater mistake." The *Morning Post*, in the course of lavish praise, said that he had now "placed himself at the head of the school of character actors". Moreover, "there were no reminiscences of any former character in Mr. Irving's Charles—it was an original creation upon which he may safely base his claim to be considered as a representative actor of the highest class". This was good, but the *Standard* was even more emphatic: "A more complete and more deserved triumph has rarely if ever been gained, and by this perfect, and perfectly artistic realisation of an historical character so familiar to all, and therefore so difficult to portray, Mr. Irving has unquestionably asserted his right to take the foremost place among the tragedians of the day, and an abiding record among the distinguished names associated with the English stage. To Mr. Irving's playing alone went up such shouts as only English throats can send forth. The 'calls' at the termination were uproarious in their warmth, and the vehemence which ardent approbation lent to hands and tongues needs other words than are in our vocabulary to express." There is scarcely a word in all the columns of congratulations which Irving's acting as Charles called forth about "mannerisms". They had gone by the board—in fact, they were largely the creation and imagination of jealousy. They had not, at this time, been discovered to the fearful and wonderful extent which, we are to suppose, according to some writers, marred his acting from the first. In short, Irving's impersonation was, in 1872, as it was in 1905, one of the most beautiful and pathetic pieces of acting which the English stage has ever seen.

Other circumstances, in addition to the merits of the drama and the acting, helped in the success of the first run of "Charles the First". On Monday, 22nd October, the Prince and Princess of Wales visited the Lyceum. The occasion was noted at length by the press, for there was curiosity to known how such a royalist drama would be received on such a night. One-third of the audience, according to the *Standard*, "were staunch royalists, about a half were interested in the play, and not in politics present or past, and only a small minority were devoted Liberals, jealous of every touch that seemed to blot the fair fame of the Radical idol. When the Prince and Princess arrived, just before the commencement of the piece, they were received in the usual loyal and undemonstrative manner; and all went quietly enough until the second act. The touching picture on the lawn of Hampton Court was appreciated, no doubt, and the acting was recognised and applauded as it deserved. It was, however, in the second act that the excitement, as usual, began. The Queen arranges with Lord Huntley that if danger threatens the King in the interview in his cabinet with imperious Oliver she shall call 'the loyal gentlemen of Lincoln's Inn to the rescue,' with a cry of 'God save the King'. 'It is an honest signal,' says the Marquis, and then one or two loyalists made a little applause. Some of the same party seemed to find an allusion to the present time in Charles's speech to Cromwell:—

Lord Huntley often has commended you
As one who shows high promise of the statesman,
And who with lusty speech can rule a throng,
Holding their passions in his hands like reins.

But it was not until Cromwell's rudeness produces from the indignant King the protest:—

'Tis not for you to limit or set forth,
The rights divine of an anointed King—

that there came at once both cheers and hissing, the former, however, mightily predominating. The Liberals had their turn at cheering Cromwell's demand:—

A people's rights; and are they not divine?

But the hissing of the minority was drowned in the loyal shouting when the representative of Charles replied:—

The people's rights, Sir, are indeed divine,
Not so the wrong of rebels.

. . . . .

Hast thou no reverence
For the marble pile of England's past?
Oh, Sir, 'tis such as thou deface the fairest
Monuments of history; inscribing with coarse sacrilege
Their names on its most sacred tablets,
Scarring beauty it took centuries to make,
And but an hour to mar.

The manner in which this was cheered till the house rang again was a thing to remember. But perhaps the climax came when the King says, after learning Cromwell's demand for the reversion of the earldom of Essex :—

Methinks I see a modern Attila,
One who, if once our dynasty should wane,
Would rally to the front with iron baton;
A tyrant, maundering and merciless,
Anarch of liberty, at heart a slave,
A scourge the Commons plait to lash themselves,
A heel to tramp their constitution under foot—

for then the audience made the allusion fit somebody, and almost equal was the applause when Cromwell was fain to doff his hat by order of the King. Not less full was the full appreciation of the home thrust :—

Thou and thy dupes have driven me to war.

But when the Queen burst in to save the King at the head of the loyal gentlemen of Lincoln's Inn, to the cry of 'God save the King,' it was curious to see how two-thirds of the listeners were like greyhounds in the slips, straining upon the start."

Early in the year 1873, Victorien Sardou's play, "Sam" was interdicted by the then minister of the Fine Arts in Paris, a circumstance which enabled one of our leader writers to pour forth the vials of his wrath upon the unfortunate Wills. He contrasted the wretched state of our laws in regard to stage plays with those of the French. He could not, unhappily, foresee that the playwrights of England—to the incredible number of seventy odd—would, thirty-five years later band together to protest against the iniquity of the Examiner of Plays, or that a weak Secretary of State would amuse the

From the painting in the possession of M. Russell Cotes, Esq.

CHARLES THE FIRST.

Japanese, in the year of grace 1907, by prohibiting the performance of an innocent piece like "The Mikado" just because a Japanese official of high degree happened to be visiting England. However, this is what the irate leader-writer said: "Our dramatic writers are free to play ducks and drakes with the susceptibilities of every nation, including our own; and when we have a play produced that seriously, if not intentionally, burlesques and insults one of the noblest characters and one of the greatest periods in English history, the public is not greatly put out. We are not deeply disturbed by the fact that a certain playwright chooses to exhibit a little perversity of sentiment and a good deal of ignorance. We go to see an actor in a big wig play some pretty domestic charades with one or two children, and if he should, in subsequent scenes, talk a vast deal of nonsense in an affected style of elocution, who is hurt by it?" Nevertheless, Charles prospered exceedingly at the Lyceum.

It is only necessary to say, in regard to the general performance, that Irving had good support in the Queen Henrietta of Miss Isabel Bateman who, on the whole, was warmly praised by the press for her intelligent performance. But the Oliver Cromwell gave him little help. This was not the fault of the actor, for, being a low comedian, he was wrongly cast for the character of the bluff burgess of Wills's play. This mistake was soon recognised by the management, and Mr. Henry Forrester was playing the part when the Prince and Princess of Wales witnessed the drama during the first month of the run. Mr. Hawes Craven was again responsible for the chief part of the scenery. It should also be recorded that the Cromwell discussion was also incidentally instrumental in the production, at the Queen's Theatre, in December, 1872, of a five-act play by Colonel Bates Richards entitled "Cromwell," in which the Protector was canonised. But the glorification process did not pay, and the play was an ignominious failure, despite the ability and pathos of Mr. George Rignold as Cromwell and the acting of John Ryder and Miss Wallis. The piece would never have been played had it not been for the production of "Charles the First," to which it was brought out as a counterblast. A curious result of the success of "Charles the First" was pointed out by the admiring yet independent critic of a paper which had given Henry Irving much encouragement in his younger days—the Liverpool *Porcupine*, which summed up the situation in a few words: "Mr. Henry Irving has accomplished a proud feat. He has made the critics speak in one voice. Gushers, growlers, enthusiasts and sneerers all have united in pronouncing Mr. Irving's Charles the First the finest and best dramatic impersonation of the present day. Such loud-spoken praise would be dangerous to some actors, but Mr. Irving, with his fine artistic appreciation of men and things, will wear his honours becomingly, and not allow himself to be carried away by a torrent of tempestuous praise. I have endeavoured—cynic that I am—to pick a hole in Mr. Irving's impersonation, but I cannot do it, and for once in a way the critics are right. Charles the First almost lives over again, and we rejoice over the fact. Not that his resuscitation would be particularly welcome to Mr. Gladstone and his Cabinet, but purely and simply that it gives modern playgoers the opportunity of witnessing a great dramatic and artistic achievement."

Having now succeeded in the creation of two absolutely dissimilar parts, in which he had won the instant and thorough recognition of the press and the public, he essayed a third character in which he was at a disadvantage. By the wish of the manager, his next part was Eugene Aram, in a drama specially written for the Lyceum by the author of "Charles the First". The subject was bound to be gloomy, and the second murderer followed hard upon the first—Mathias. Soon after the appearance of Lord Lytton's novel in 1831, various stage versions appeared, but without success, and none of these was familiar to the public of 1873. But the book was well known, and Hood's poem was a favourite with readers and reciters. So that there was little in the way of novelty with which to tempt the playgoer. The author certainly relied upon himself, and his treatment of the story was something of a surprise, for some of the audience anticipated a melodrama highly spiced with visible assassination, with the reproduction of a real criminal court, and, perhaps, a procession to the gallows. But Mr. Wills did not indulge the spectators with a murder either on the stage, or off, and there was not a trial, let alone a scaffold scene. Moreover, he kept the action of his piece in one place—although there was a different scene for each of the three acts—and within the space of twelve hours—a rigidity of construction which vied with that of the ancient Greek dramatists. Before coming to the acting, it is instructive to take the evidence of the *Times* as to the reception of Henry Irving and the position which he had now attained. "Rarely is a theatrical audience," it said, before describing the play, "save on some festive occasion indicated by the almanack, so anxious as the crowd which on Saturday evening filled the Lyceum Theatre to overflowing. Yet nobody acquainted with the present state of the theatrical atmosphere expected that it would be otherwise. Not only was 'Charles the First' one of the most thoroughly successful and generally impressive pieces of the winter season, but it was a work of a new kind. The patrons of the drama are much more earnest and numerous than they were twenty years ago, and any amount of interest could be fully accounted for by the fact that 'Charles the First,' withdrawn after Friday's performance, was to be replaced on Saturday by a new play, written by the same author, and sustained by the same principal actor. The im-

EUGENE ARAM.

First acted at the Lyceum on 19th April, 1873.

Eugene Aram	Mr. Henry Irving.
Parson Meadows	Mr. W. H. Stephens.
Richard Houseman	Mr. E. F. Edgar.
Jowell	Mr. F. W. Irish.
Joey	Miss Willa Brown.
Ruth Meadows	Miss Isabel Bateman.

Act I. The Vicar's Garden. Act II. The Home Room of the Parsonage. Act III. The Churchyard in the Grey Light of Dawn.

portance attached to the actor must not be overlooked. The success of 'Charles the First' is closely associated with that of Mr. Henry Irving, who was comparatively in the background three years ago, but whose progress is now anxiously watched as an upward career to which none can assign a possible limit."

This was, indeed, a promising beginning of an important criticism, but there was more satisfaction in the remainder of the notice. In the second act, where Eugene Aram, having hitherto assumed a bearing of lofty bravado when in the presence of his accomplice and accuser, becomes crushed by the force of circumstances, "Mr. Irving's delineation of the fall from a haughty defiance of daring to a state of helpless humiliation is not to be surpassed in force and elaboration." His greatest triumph was in the last act, which was—as originally played—practically a soliloquy. Eugene Aram is alone in the churchyard in an agony of remorse. He thinks that all chance of forgiveness is denied him, when he receives a visit from the vicar's daughter, Ruth, who loves him. To her as to a guardian angel, he makes a full confession of his guilt. He relates that the murder was committed in extenuating circumstances comprising the atrocious wrongs inflicted by his victim on the woman he fondly loved, but the weight of conscience is too strong for him, and he dies in the arms of Ruth, who is faithful to the end. "We could not without quotation convey a notion of the vigour with which this is written, nor even with a quotation could we convey a notion of Mr. Irving's marvellous representation of the various phases of mental agony, undergone by the wretched criminal. . . . A burst of admiration followed the termination of the drama, and this had a remarkable effect, following, as it did, upon the breathless attention with which it had been watched. If the conclusion of 'Charles the First' gained a portion of its celebrity from the abnormal quantity of tears shed in the sometimes apathetic stalls, the death of Eugene was equally remarkable for the blank terror which it seemed to diffuse—a terror, be it observed, produced by purely dramatic means apparently of the simplest kind. Throughout the play, not so much as the composition of one elaborate living picture is attempted. When the stage is occupied by the fewest persons, the drama is at its strongest. Our opinion of the admirable acting of Mr. Irving has been briefly expressed in the course of our narrative. He is the figure that chiefly absorbs attention."

On every hand, the representation of Eugene Aram was acclaimed. "That an actor would get variety out of such an unrelieved scene," said the *Observer*, in reference to the last act, "is marvellous. The confession was listened to with the deepest attention, and the on-coming death, now at the tomb, now writhing against the tree, and now prostrate on the turf, brings into play an amount of study which is little less than astonishing, and an amount of power for which credit would be given to Mr. Irving by few who have seen his finest performances." The *Morning Post* pointed out certain defects in the play, especially that of the last act: "a still greater mistake is to present a character through one entire act prone on the ground, or, at best, rising only to kneel or stand, and again to fall"—a very difficult position, it will be admitted, for any actor. But it found Irving equal to the tremendous responsibility thrown upon him, and it recorded the fact that "his personation of Eugene Aram produced an absolutely tremendous effect upon the audience".

The *Spectator* published an illuminating criticism in the course of which it compared Irving's acting of Mathias and Eugene Aram: "The points of difference between Mathias in 'The Bells' and Eugene Aram are as striking as the points of resemblance; in both the active passion is remorse, in both it kills, kills at the very moment when the victim, in each case 'a great sinner, uncondemned,' believes himself to be at length emancipated from it; in both the murderer confesses, and describes his crime in words and action; but there resemblance ceases. In his impersonation of the unsuspected murderer of the Polish Jew, Mr. Irving has no enemy but himself, and the study is finer, though not nearly so fine as it might have been, had the author's idea been left in its integrity, had not the English adapter resorted to the vulgar expedient of a phantom to produce the effect intended to be the work of conscience only. The close and terrible wrestle of Mathias with the betrayer within his own breast, the tremendous solitude of the murderer's soul, the vain piteous cunning, the terrific yielding up of the secret,—which yet is never told to the world without,—under the pressure of mental torture made as visible as the wrenching of the limbs by mechanical cruelty, blend in a perfect and unique representation, of which his impersonation of Eugene Aram is, in some sense, a repetition, but more strictly a variation. The prosperous, calculating, popular, secretive tavern-keeper, who struggles with his haunting fiend, and generally banishes him; who hoards the stolen gold, and reckons it *quand même;* whose remorse is all throughout so strangely physical, is replaced by the gentle, pensive, studious teacher, whose enemy has found him, and abides with him; a shadow in the noon, not only of his love, but of every day, who is hardly glad, even for a moment, even on the eve of his marriage.

"To Eugene Aram, too, comes detection and ruin, but they come from without, and for a little while the spirit of fierce resistance springs up, and he strives against his fate, in the person of Houseman; but the enemy within surrenders quickly to the enemy without, and the heart vanquished by both, numbed by long suffering, wakes up to rage for but a little while before it breaks. The acting of Mr. Irving in this character is wonderfully fine, so deeply impressive that once only, by a bit of 'business' with lights and a looking-glass quite unworthy of the play and of him, does he remind one that he is acting and not living through that mortal struggle; so various, that to lose sight of his face for a moment is to lose some expression full of power and of fidelity to the pervading motive of the part. In the first scene with his betrothed Ruth, the pathetic wanness of the face, the faint flicker of the attempted smile, the infinite woe of the look, unseen by her, with which he replies to her question, 'Eugene, were you ever gay?'—the frequent, slight shudder, the absent yet watchful glance, the recurrent uneasiness about 'the stranger,' who has asked the gardener for a spade and talked about St. Robert's cave, are of finished skill and perfection. In the second act, the anguish of his mind is intensified with every moment, until in the sudden outburst of his fury, his defiance of Houseman, his proud boast of his character in the place and the influence of it, the change, fierce yet subtle, from sad and dreamy quiet to the hard, scoffing, worldly wisdom of the criminal at bay before his accomplice, there is a positive relief for him and for ourselves. Then comes the terror, abject indeed for a while, with desperate breathless rally, thick incoherent speech, failing limbs, ghastly face, dry lips, and clicking throat, as dreadful as only fear can be, and horribly true. The quick, gasping sentences he speaks to the old rector, his return to the room, the infinite anguish of the horror which has seized upon him because men's hands have stirred the mouldering remains that for ever haunt his fancy; the fight of the mind which is torturing with the body which is betraying him, are all perfect; and if he did not look at himself and talk about his scared face, and then rush out, without tying the white cravat, which streams about him in a wild disorder, not easy to be accounted for to the curious crowd outside, there would be nothing to impair the overwhelming effect. In the concluding scenes, one, in which he sends Houseman flying from the churchyard appalled at the sight of his sufferings, a second, in which, in accents of heartrending grief and contrition, he implores heaven for a sign of pardon, and flings himself down by a cross, with an awful face, the white, mute impersonation of mental despair and physical exhaustion; and a third, in which he makes a confession to Ruth, and dies,—the play of his features, the variety and intensity of his expression, are most remarkable. But the dead face of Eugene Aram the murderer is quite unlike the dead face of Mathias the murderer; the morning sun comes up behind the trees and shines upon the churchyard, Ruth's kneeling figure, and the 'great sinner,' who has repented and confessed,—white, peaceful, pardoned."

"Eugene Aram," produced on Saturday, 19th April, 1873, ran for three months at the Lyceum. The last night of the season, Saturday, 19th July, was set apart for the benefit of the actor who was now famous throughout England. "The Bells" was revived, for this occasion, and the enthusiasm was so remarkable that "for once we have to record," said a contemporary chronicle, "that an actor, during the progress of a three-act play, *was summoned to the footlights seven times*"— an event which compelled the use of italics!— "and that at the end the ladies, who are one and all great admirers of Mr. Irving, showed their estimate of his talents by pelting him with bouquets". The programme concluded with the last act of "Charles the First". The fall of the curtain was the signal for an outburst of cheering which was prolonged until the hero of the night had appeared three times before the curtain. Even then, despite the beaming presence of Mr. Bateman, the storm of bravos continued, and "Irving, Irving," rang through the house. At last, according to a trustworthy source, "as there seemed some probability that those present would continue cheering, stamping, shouting, and clapping their hands until midnight, Mr. Irving once more came to the footlights, and, when silence was restored," said: "Ladies and gentlemen, I have no words in which to express to you my heartfelt thanks for the extraordinary reception you have this evening given me, and I only hope with all sincerity that the same kindly feeling may be extended to me next season, when we re-open in Bulwer's play of 'Richelieu'." So ended Henry Irving's second season at the Lyceum. It might have been thought that the hard-worked actor would have taken a prolonged holiday, especially as he had to prepare for his first impersonation of a character made famous on the stage by Macready, Richelieu. But, within a few weeks, he was seen in some of the chief towns of the provinces in "Charles the First". In Liverpool, as usual, he received the warmest of welcomes. The *Daily Post*, in the course of a minute description of his performance, asserted that "Mr. Henry Irving has laboured with a fulness of care and a resulting display of histrionic power and grace which bring to mind Carlyle's definition of genius as a superlative power of taking trouble. Every action and accent that well-directed study could arrive at is here achieved with rare truth of instinct and balance of effect. Even the somewhat measured and stilted delivery of the King in his lively gossip with his children on the sward at Hampton Court has its significance. It suggests the character of a man every inch a king, not in the sense of one naturally and exuberantly kingly, but in the sense of one in whom kingship was a noble egotism, a sort of distinguished pedantry; one who might be described as a royal Malvolio, wrapt up even in moments of domestic abandonment in a perpetual consciousness of the monarchial character and all that it involved. Never laying altogether aside in the family relations of the King this solemn tone of kindliness and playfulness, Mr. Irving shows great art in casting off with infinite ease all monarchial affectation when called upon to do real work with the representatives of the Parliament. The work done may be foolish, but it is done royally. The King's demeanour in the interview with Cromwell in the second act is very grand. His pulses quicken, his eloquence becomes pungent, his resolution glows, his very frame vibrates with a manly, soldierly, kingly daring, which makes small account of the most formidable obstacles, and holds no parley even with tremendous odds. Another phase of the character most nobly portrayed is that which follows the fatal betrayal at Newark. The spirit of the King, though saddened, is not abased. He towers above all around him. He awes the handsome traitor who has sold him into grovelling penitence. He consoles as well as he can the wife whose earlier years of married happiness he has tended with ever fresh devotion. Then he surrenders his sword with the calm submission of a martyr." An over-flowing house applauded most rapturously and in the right places, the recalls after each act were enthusiastic, and the actor's "truly great performance" received a worthy recognition at the hands of his many old Liverpool admirers.

CHAPTER X.

1873-1874.

"Richelieu" at the Lyceum—Irving compared with Macready in the character—John Oxenford's great praise—"Tragic acting in the grandest style"—The *Standard* eulogises Irving's Richelieu—The drama acted for over four months at the Lyceum—The young critics, Dutton Cook and Clement Scott, dissent from the general praise—An old-fashioned "slating"—Illness of Irving's father—His death—Production of "Philip"—The *Globe* on Irving's position—"Charles the First" revived—Irving plays Eugene Aram and Jeremy Diddler for his benefit.

IRVING had now reached a critical stage in his career. He was still a young man. He had established his reputation as a serious actor with Mathias at the age of thirty-three, and had confirmed it with Charles a year later. A false step at this important period would have been most prejudicial. He was still a salaried actor and under the management of Colonel Bateman, a worthy man whose daughter was a member of the company and had to be considered. This circumstance being remembered, it is all the more to his credit that he had produced "The Bells," in which there was no part for Miss Isabel Bateman. The young actress had her chance in "Charles the First" and in "Eugene Aram". The words of Bateman when he saw Irving as Digby Grant must also be borne in mind—"That young man should play Richelieu". And play Richelieu he did, although very unwillingly. For he regarded himself as an original actor, and, while the interpreter of Shakespeare may think for himself, the impersonator of Richelieu was obliged to follow, to a great extent, the beaten track of tradition. More dangerous still, he was bound to bear the brunt of comparison with Macready, who was still the apostle of a large army of keen admirers. It may be as well to bring into evidence the statement made twenty years later by Irving in regard to the early productions at the Lyceum under the Bateman management. We have seen that "The Bells" was brought out against Bateman's wish and that the theatre had, as Irving modestly put it in 1884, "prospered". It was difficult to find a successor to "The Bells". "It was thought that whatever part I played it must be a villain, associated with crime in some way or other; because I had been identified with such sort of characters, it was thought my forte lay in that direction. I should tell you that I had associated histrionically with all sorts of bad characters, housebreakers, black-legs, assassins. When 'Charles the First' was announced, it was said that the bad side of the King's character should be the one portrayed, not the good, because it would be ridiculous to expect me to exhibit any pathos, or to give the domestic and loving side of the character. After the first night, the audience thought differently. Following 'Charles the First,' 'Eugene Aram' was, by Mr. Bateman's desire, produced. Then Mr. Bateman wished me to play Richelieu. I had no desire to do that, but he continued to persuade, and, to please him, I did it." A more conscientious actor than Henry Irving, or one who worked more assiduously at the task which he had undertaken, never lived. Although he did not, owing to the nervousness incidental to such a trying experiment, do himself full justice on the first night of the revival—Saturday, 27th September, 1873, which was also the opening night of the season—he created an impression which was greatly in his favour.[1] John Oxenford, in the *Times*, prefaced his description of the performance with a summary of the state of the stage at that period, and pointed out that the Lyceum was now the only possible home in London for tragedy and pieces akin to tragedy, "unassisted by spectacle"—an observation of some significance. All the same, "such a demonstration as that which was made on Saturday could not have been anticipated even by the most sanguine among the hopeful.

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[1] "Richelieu" was first acted at Covent Garden on 7th March, 1839, under the management of Macready. Helen Faucit (afterwards Lady Theodore Martin) was the original Julie de Mortemar. This was Lord Lytton's third essay as a dramatist. "The Duchesse de Vallière" was his first play, in 1837, "The Lady of Lyons" his second, in 1838.

"The play itself, excellent as a specimen of dramatic talent employed in the treatment of an historical subject, is not one that might be particularly expected to excite enthusiasm or curiosity. It has never wholly disappeared from the boards since it was originally brought out by Mr. Macready at Covent Garden, and it has always had a place in the repertory of Mr. Phelps. The great Cardinal, whom the poet has whitewashed all over, leaving nothing untouched but his vestment, is nevertheless but a figure composed of materials of which the idols of a mob commonly consist. His patriotism, his love for France in the abstract, whom he personifies in his imagination, is of so purely ideal a kind that we can hardly fancy that even Frenchmen would be greatly moved by it. He stands apart from that dramatic interest which is often found to be of such inestimable value, and to which 'Charles the First' owed much of its success. In spite of all rehabilitation, he remains a wily politician, with a very hot temper, who, taking Lysander for his model and consequently eking out the hide of the lion with that of the fox, contrives by extreme craft, to overthrow every enemy who crosses his path.

"In spite of all this, never did aristocratic statesman leap with greater agility into favour with a multitude, which comprised idolators of every class, than did 'Armand du Plessis-Richelieu' on the night of Saturday last. The feat is to be attributed wholly and solely to the genius of Mr. Irving.

"The proficiency of this gentleman in making himself up into the semblance of an historical personage, as shown in 'Charles the First,' is again revealed in 'Richelieu'. Those who are familiar with the portrait of the Cardinal must be at once struck by its presentation in a living form when Mr. Irving makes his first appearance. The face, the manner, the attitudes, all give evidence of thought and study. The elocution in the earlier scenes is even and well-sustained, and the apostrophe to France, with which the first act terminates, is all that could be desired. The passing regret over bygone strength, which is expressed more by gesture than by words, when Richelieu finds himself unable to lift the sword which he wielded in his youth, is subtly given, but the actor reserves the plenitude of his power for the fourth act. His defence of Julie de Mortemar when the minions of the King would snatch her from his arms, the weight of the sacerdotal authority with which he threatens to 'launch the curse of Rome' on his assailant, his self-transformation into the semblance of a Hebrew prophet of the olden time, with whom imprecations were deeds, combine together to produce a most astounding effect. Here is tragic acting in the grandest style, and it will be borne in mind that, although 'Richelieu' is not a tragedy, it belongs practically to the tragical category, as none can do justice to it but a tragedian. Before the effect of the fulmination has subsided come the well-known lines:—

RICHELIEU.

Revived at the Lyceum on 27th September, 1873.

Cardinal Richelieu - -	Mr. Henry Irving.
Louis XIII. - - - -	Mr. John Clayton.
Gaston (Duke of Orleans) -	Mr. Beaumont.
Baradas - - - - -	Mr. H. Forrester.
De Mauprat - - - -	Mr. J. B. Howard.
De Beringhen - - - -	Mr. F. Charles.
Joseph - - - - -	Mr. John Carter.
Huguet - - - - -	Mr. E. F. Edgar.
François - - - - -	Mr. H. B. Conway.
De Claremont - - - -	Mr. A. Tapping.
Captain of the Guard - -	Mr. Harwood.
First Secretary - - -	Mr. W. L. Branscombe.
Second Secretary - - -	Mr. Henry.
Third Secretary - - -	Mr. Collett.
Marion de Lorme - - -	Miss Le Thière.
Julie de Mortemar - -	Miss Isabel Bateman.

Act I., Scene 1. Salon in the House of Marion de Lorme; Scene 2. Richelieu's Cabinet in Palais Cardinal. Act II., Scene 1. Apartment in Mauprat's New House; Scene 2. Richelieu's Apartment, as before. Act III. Richelieu's Apartment at Ruelle—a Gothic Chamber. Act IV. Gardens in the Louvre. Act V. The King's Closet at the Louvre.

> Walk blindfold on—behind thee stalks the headsman.
> Ha! ha! how pale he is! Heaven save my country.

"The scornful laugh by which the flow of indignation is checked, and which was a great point with Mr. Macready had told with surprising force, and when the Cardinal had fallen back exhausted, the descending drop-curtain on Saturday night gave the signal, as it were, to the scene to which we have above referred. The old-fashioned excitement which we associate with Edmund Kean and his 'wolves' was manifested once more in all its pristine force. Enthusiastic shouts of approbation came from every part of the house. The pit not only *rose*, but it made its rising conspicuous by the waving of countless hats and handkerchiefs. Not bare approval, but hearty sympathy was denoted by this extraordinary demonstration, and this sympathy nothing but genius and thorough self-abandonment on the part of the artist could have produced.

"The triumph of the fourth act was continued through the fifth; the quiet comments of the apparently dying Cardinal on the effete projects of the King and the newly appointed Ministers were most delicately doled out, and the sudden transformation of extreme debility into an assertion of pristine vigour was followed by another storm of applause. Of the success of the performance there could not be the shadow of a doubt. Not since the curse pronounced by the elder Miss Bateman in 'Leah' have we seen an audience so strongly stirred by the utterance of one tragic artist."

The *Daily Telegraph* found much to commend in this initial impersonation of "Richelieu," and it rightly recognised the "extreme nervousness and a sense of the heavy responsibility of the task," which somewhat marred the first performance. Nor did it regard the revival as "secure of one of those long runs to which the patrons of the Lyceum have grown accustomed"—a prophecy which, happily, was not borne out by subsequent events, for "Richelieu" had a successful career of a hundred and twenty nights at the Lyceum—a very satisfactory result in view of the fact that it was an old play, and one that had been frequently acted, not only by Macready and Samuel Phelps, but by every other tragedian of the time. This result was largely due to Irving's wonderful capacity for taking pains and for improving upon his first impersonation of a character—a faculty which increased with his years. So remarkable a hold had he obtained on public opinion when he acted Richelieu, that the *Standard*—then in the height of its popularity and an organ of authority in other matters than those of politics—published a second article on "Richelieu". It is a remarkable piece of criticism and a wonderful tribute to the actor. It is given here, word for word, as it appeared on Tuesday, 14th October, 1873:—

"The brilliant success which marked Mr. Irving's first appearance as Cardinal Richelieu has proved to be no straw-fire smouldering down to ashes when the enthusiasm of a band of immediate friends and adherents had burnt itself out. Rather is it a well-trimmed lamp, which, though it may have flared a little wildly under the first stormy gusts of the popular voice, now burns steadily and brightly—a beacon to guide many a goodly houseful within the pleasant portals of the Lyceum. It is a fact on which London has to congratulate itself not a little, for in Mr. Irving it sees an actor of its own rearing, who has grown to his present intellectual and artistic stature by the sole experience he has gained on London boards, and whose genius has been fostered by the approbation of London audiences; proving that, though that provincial training which was once thought so indispensable to the ripening of an actor, is no longer possible, a decided vocation may in a few years mature itself to the highest proficiency unaided by any such preparatory academy. Truly wonderful, and in the highest degree encouraging, indeed, is it to note how this young actor, purely from the strength and light within him, with no beaten path of tradition to facilitate his early footsteps, no guiding hand of some famed master, no brilliant models to dart inspiration and shorten study, has yet with almost unhesitating tread climbed the rugged steep of art and gained the upper heights, reaching the topmost summits, as it were, at a leap. If it be remembered how very few years ago it is that Mr. Irving was credited with the happy characterisation of such a part as Mr. Chevenix in 'Uncle Dick's Darling,' as his utmost effort, to speak thus will appear no exaggeration when he appears before us now as the representative of Cardinal Richelieu, rendering Bulwer's clever play a possible entertainment for modern audiences, to whom it must otherwise have remained a problematical subject of reading-room study, and so opening up for the future such a prospect of dramatic edification as only yesterday was deemed an almost desperate anticipation. Thanks to Mr. Irving, young England may yet know something of a national drama, and not grow to associate the stage entirely with glittering show, glib punning, and graceful nether-limbs. Not that Cardinal Richelieu is a part of the highest exigency in point of intellectual grasp, or as a means of expounding through art subtle apprehensions of the springs of feeling and action, but it implies an ample command of the mechanical resources of the actor's craft, without which he could not hope, whatever might be his sympathies with the highest productions of the stage and his mental power of probing their depth and significance, to realise the heroic figures round which they centre. Written expressly to bring out these executive capabilities in an actor then at the most mature period of his very great powers, and whose life had been one strenuous study of the means of producing strong and impressive effects, of suddenly startling or deeply stirring an audience within the limits of truth and without over-stepping the strict though flowing curves of beauty or the perilous hedge of the sublime, such a part was perhaps better calculated to set at rest the question as to the justice of Mr. Irving's pretensions to become a leading tragic actor than had he undertaken any of the usual round of Shakespearean characters in which the point of his technical and physical sufficiency would have got mixed up with the profundity or propriety of his interpretations of text or character. An actor who has so thoroughly mastered the requisites of his art, and has shown the sustained power to fill up a canvas of such dimensions with good work to the last inch, need not flinch before the task of presenting the most arduous and colossal of the heroes of our stage. It was observed by us that on the first night Mr. Irving appeared, in the fiery zeal of ambition, to have exaggerated the necessities of the case, and to have lavished a disproportionate amount of minuteness of finish and intensity of exertion on what was on the part of the author—broad and dashing as it might be—still only a clever sketch, the elaborate working up of which would but serve to betray original defects of drawing. Purposely, or as the result of that instinct which causes the craftsman to do everything with the least expenditure of effort, the balance is restored, and the amount of powder used is no more than necessary to carry the shot home. Freed from the inalienable anxieties of a first night, and instructed by its indispensable lessons, Mr. Irving now presents to the world a picture of the old cardinal vigorous and sharply marked as one of Retsch's outlines, and, though without over elaboration, more minutely and carefully filled in with touches of truthful and telling colour and significance—not stuck on for effect, as from afterthought, but woven into the texture of the part—than was ever the case with any other representation of the character we have seen, not excepting that of Macready himself. In the first act, hugged in his furred robe, darting with arrowy keenness vulpine glances from beneath his shaggy brows, a smile, bitter or benevolent, ever hovering about the stern pursed-up lip, the senile gait still preserving remnants of vigour, made up a perfect picture to the eye, while the measured and significantly terse speech, illustrated by ever-varied and appropriate attitude, the thoughtful by-play, as it is called, completed to the sense, in the most satisfactory fullness, both of character and situation. The rhapsody ending this act, delivered with an eloquent fervour, gaunt arms and glistening eyes uplifted, worthy of words weighted with more genuine metal, gives the first hint of Mr. Irving's emotional intensity. As the play proceeds these vivid outbursts of strongly realised feeling become more frequent, upheaving like volcanic commotions, and pouring out words in a boiling torrent, fiery and scathing as lava. Such was the threat of Rome's anathema commencing :—

Aye is it so?
Then wakes the power which in the age of iron
Burst forth to curb the great and raise the low—

when the tempest of the soul seemed to act outwardly on the frame, swaying and lifting it bodily from the ground, like an uprooted tree, towards the object of the cardinal's terrific wrath. The physical grandeur of this explosion, combined with the overbearing moral force, is unmatched by any other similar exhibition of the actor's power throughout the play, and only approached by the triumphant springing up of the cardinal from his arm-chair at the close of the action, and after the finely-wrought scene of feigned exhaustion, when, trampling the state paper, so perplexing to poor Louis, beneath his feet, he lowers up in savage exultation at the recovery of his lost power, and the distant prospect of dire vengeance over his discomfited enemies. The concentrated malignity with which, as he half-glided, half-tottered towards Baradas, his clenched teeth and parched throat, rather than his lips, force out the words 'thou hast lost the stake,' could scarcely be surpassed for spell-like power over the imagination—the man seemed transformed into some huge cobra. We have dwelt more emphatically on these passages, denoting the actor's capacity for expressing vigorous passion, as it undoubtedly forms his strongest side, but that there is no deficiency of pathos in his nature was abundantly proved in the various passages of tender expansion towards Julie, and more especially in the return upon himself in the fourth act, 'I am not made to live,' where the notable simile between the cardinal's star and a rocket occurs, which piece of profound bathos Mr. Irving's art disguised into an utterance of touching and heart-moving melancholy. But we have said enough, nor must we court the danger, in our anxious desire to signalise the undoubted and marvellous achievements of a young and rising actor, of overstating his claims and painting a picture in colours which others less enthusiastic may not recognise in the original. But as truth is great and will prevail, so with her sister, art, whose genuine presence once established, her ultimate triumph is only a question of time."

The play, which had been slightly condensed for the Lyceum revival, was mounted with much liberality and completeness of decoration, the costumes being rich and tasteful: "the characters wear the aspect of animated Vandycks," said one critic. But Irving, in regard to acting, had the entire weight of the play on his shoulders. Macready had a most capable company to support him, every part in the play being taken by actors who were excellent in their respective parts. "The Lyceum company numbers few actors of any note, and occasionally the drama suffered gravely from the incompetence of its exponents. The characters of Julie and De Mauprat were even so inefficiently filled as to provoke the displeasure of an audience that seemed otherwise disposed to regard the performance with excessive leniency and to lavish applause at every possible opportunity." Despite these deficiencies, "Richelieu" was played for over four months at the Lyceum.

Lest it should be imagined that Irving's career was entirely a bed of roses when he began his brilliant reign as Richelieu, the reverse side of the picture must be given. There were some young critics in London who, with the impetuosity of youth, agreed to differ with such experienced judges of acting as John Oxenford. One of these was Dutton Cook, who invariably was grudging in his praise of Irving. Sometimes, indeed, he was the model of cold and calculated contempt. He had scarcely the proverbial bone to throw at a dog for Irving as Richelieu. "Mr. Irving appears as Richelieu," he wrote, in the *World*, "the actor's recent successes on the stage justifying, perhaps,"—note the qualification—"his ambition to distinguish himself in so important a character. Mr. Irving plays with care and intelligence, his physical gifts, with the assistance of appropriate costume, enabling him to present a striking resemblance to the well-known portraits of the Cardinal. His performance, on the whole, however, is deficient in sustained force and fails to impress. Richelieu has to be depicted as prematurely old and decrepit, and yet must be represented by an actor of untiring energy and inordinate strength of voice. He is charged with the delivery now of mordant jests, and now of protracted rhapsodies. Mr. Irving's system of elocution is somewhat monotonous, and his longer speeches appear to tax him severely, their effect upon the audience being oppressive"—a statement, by the way, which is not in accordance with the recorded facts, as already evinced. However, this sapient critic continues: "His sarcastic utterances lose point from his too deliberate manner and his lack of a penetrating, resonant quality of voice. Upon the humorous side of the character he lays little stress, and neglects the many opportunities of this kind provided by the dramatist for the enlivenment of the audience. In the hands of Macready, Richelieu during the earlier scenes of the play was almost a comic part, and thus contrast and variety were secured as the story advanced. Mr. Irving is spiritless enough for three acts, but he permits himself a grand burst of passion at the close of the fourth. Here, indeed, his vehemence has something more of deliriousness about it than the situation really demands, involving a total loss of the cardinal's dignity; but the actor's genuine ardour evoked storms of applause. His most successful effort was the last scene, which was in many respects very finely rendered. Mr. Irving will no doubt improve upon his performance with a view to investing it with increase of harmony and coherence; at present, it is somewhat disappointing to his admirers." But, severe as was this criticism, it was mildness itself in comparison with that which greeted the actor, when, a few hours after the first performance, he read the notice written in the *Observer* by Clement Scott. It is rather amusing to look upon such excited utterances after the lapse of years, but such slashing, dashing criticism—especially on the part of a writer who had but comparatively little experience of his work, for Scott was only twenty-eight years of age—could not be considered helpful. Not that it mattered, in the long run, and there was much worse, in the way of so-called criticism, to come during the next few years. No useful purpose would be served by quoting the article, which is of inordinate length, in full, but here are a few specimens of criticism as it was occasionally written in these early years by over-confident critics. Scott wrote much in praise of Irving, but this kind of condemnation over-stepped the limits of judicial criticism :—

"Let us agree to differ. This serious, earnest, kindly compromise stands us in good stead occasionally. On some points of dramatic art there is no argument whatever. Discussion is out of the question, comparing of notes is utterly useless. Let us then out with it honestly, and own that the long-expected, anxiously-awaited performance of 'Richelieu,' at one of the best of our theatres, was but very slightly to our liking. We are not afraid of our opinion, for we shall state the why and the wherefore ; but it is truly an ungrateful task to speak anything but praise of a theatre which is the very home of art, or of an actor who is justly regarded as one of its most brilliant ornaments. We own at once we are in a serious minority. The old play went as it has probably never gone before. The principal actor was cheered and fêted with such a triumph as has fallen to few actors in our time. Hats and handkerchiefs were waved ; the pit and gallery leaped upon the benches ; the house shook and rang with the applause, but the excitement was unwholesome, and the cheers were forced. It was the wild delirium of a revival meeting, an excited, earnest enthusiast having previously created slaves, bent them all to his imperious will. The greater the shouting on the stage, the more the cheering of the audience. It was a triumph of din, an apotheosis of incoherence. Seriously, we cannot fail to feel a little vexed when all our dearest hopes and ambitions are thus cruelly dashed to the ground. We talk of the old school, the old stilted elocution, the old unpardonable mannerisms, the old drawls, and groans, and sighs, and forced efforts to create effect, and, behold, we have a famous old play, as it appears to us, with the sense more mangled, and the exaggeration more sublime. One can well pardon the artists for 'o'erdoing termagant,' since last evening the delicacy and grace of acting were lost in a whirlwind of noise. Nice points and rare graces of thought were absolutely smothered and crushed out by this intemperate, leather-lunged audience, and of interesting examples of refined and thoughtful acting there were not a few.

"Let us briefly summarise the acts according to the impression they seemed to make upon the audience. It was all tame, lifeless, and unintelligible until the appearance of Mr. Irving as Richelieu, and then the actor received such a welcome and a shout as fall but seldom to a monarch. The picturesque appearance of the man at once impressed the whole house, the splendid presence, the noble and most expressive face, the sunk eyes, ascetic features and thoughtful brow, the long taper fingers, and the refined dignity at once filled up the picture. We forgot that awkward halting (not decrepit) walk. We did not linger upon the occasional ungainly action. The man, Richelieu, as he stood, impressed and convinced the audience that a great performance was at hand. But why did it not come? We had all read 'Richelieu' beforehand. We had all made ourselves masters of the nervous vigorous language. We had all made up our minds where points would be made, and where some poetical fancy would carry the audience away. But, strange to say, the delivery of the verse by Mr. Irving was monotonous and stilted. He seemed to say to the audience, 'I am about to deliver some hundreds of lines of blank verse, and you all know that a tone and an air are assumed when legitimate blank verse is delivered'. But surely this was the old difficulty all over again. This is just what we have so often protested against. We had hoped that verse might be pronounced without any air and special chant, and we who love natural and not conventional acting, regarded Mr. Irving as the Horatius, boldly prepared to step forward and defend the bridge of unconventionality. But it was not to be. The attitudes were new, the business thoughtful; but poor Lord Lytton's verse was thrust into the old mill, and it was being wound off for the edification of the audience. It was not the kind of verse that deserved such treatment, and those who had read over the play beforehand, delighted in the thought how passage after passage would come out clear and new at the beckoning of Mr. Irving.

"In the second act, the monotony of Mr. Irving's general delivery increased very much, and his best (and admirable) business with the sword, his failing strength, ending with a short, dry, hacking cough, was naturally but very little appreciated by an audience who believed in no acting that did not 'fetch them'. It was, to tell the truth, a dull act. The third act was even duller still, mainly owing to the darkness and the failure of Mr. Irving to make any impression whatever in his long soliloquy. The sudden end of the act with the 'Richelieu is dead,' and the picture, created a reaction, but the play was not at this point going well. No one doubted that the performance of Mr. Irving was intelligent and extremely picturesque. That came without saying. But many in the audience expected a great performance, and it did not appear as if the power was forthcoming. As a picture, the Richelieu was everything that could be desired, but the acting was only of average merit. The excitement of the evening was reserved for the end of the fourth act, when Richelieu launches the curse of Rome on Baradas.

"Seldom has such excitement been seen at a theatre, and seldom have we so entirely disagreed with the verdict. We said at the outset, we agree to differ. At this speech, and at the final words, the pit rose, and literally yelled for Mr. Irving. But what had been done? Voice, strength, and energy overtaxed; a speech delivered so incoherently, that few could follow one syllable; one of those whirlwinds of noise which creates applause, mainly owing to an irresistible, but still unhealthy, excitement. We doubt not, many consider this very great acting. It looks so; it sounds so. In the last act Mr. Irving once more commanded our sympathies, and once more disappointed us. What could be better than the action, the look, the attitude of the old man 'semi mort'? How really very fine was that scene when the secretaries told their story, and the Cardinal half-buried and half-dying in the chair, watched his irresolute master, and waited for the supreme moment of reaction! But what followed, unhappily, with the reaction—the loss of voice, the absence of power, the acting which looked wonderful, mainly from its extravagance. We refuse to prophesy concerning future verdicts. We merely declare that we disagree with that recorded last night. A more picturesque, a possibly more intelligent, Richelieu has seldom been seen.

"The audience deliberately voted for the management. With great regret, and for reasons into which it is impossible to enter now, we cannot endorse the popular verdict."

Henry Irving had other matters to disturb him in 1873 beyond a little adverse criticism which, however much or how little, deserved, did not affect the public estimation of him. During the run of "Richelieu," he was troubled by the illness of his father. On a certain Sunday morning, he sent a letter by messenger to his friend, Frank Marshall, which speaks for itself:—

"My dear Frank,

"I am very sorry that I can't be with you to-day. I start for Birmingham at five o'clock—my father is ill there and has expressed a wish to see me.

"Please tell your brother how I regret being unable to accept his hospitality.

"I struggled hard last night to be with you—but was really too done up. Richelieu twice is a trifle too much."

Here we see the young actor of thirty-five, having played a most arduous part in the afternoon and again in the evening of the previous day, journeying to Birmingham in order to see his sick father, and returning to London in time to resume his work at the theatre on the Monday. Until the shadow of the end fell upon him, Irving never betrayed any feeling of fatigue or depression to those who met him, either in business or socially. He had an iron constitution, of which he was justly proud. His father, it may be mentioned here, kept his affectionate record of his son's career until the end of the summer season of 1874. Samuel Brodribb died, in Bristol, on 20th June, 1876, so that he lived to know of his son's great triumph as Hamlet.

As we have the documentary evidence of the *Standard*—and other papers—to testify, Irving stimulated himself to further efforts after the first night of Lytton's play, and his Richelieu became a great achievement. It was an extremely popular performance, not only in London, but when, at the end of the season, he went on tour with it in the provinces. "Richelieu" was succeeded, on Saturday, 7th February, 1874, by "Philip," a drama in four acts, by Hamilton Aïdé, in which Irving acted the part of a romantic young lover, who imagines that he is a murderer. For, at the end of the first act, Philip, in self-defence, shoots his half-brother, and leaves him for dead. In the later acts, Philip, having married his first love, about whom he had quarrelled and for whom he had committed—as he thinks—a terrible crime, is actuated by the pangs of jealousy. So that, in some respects, Philip resembled Eugene Aram, for both characters are overcome by remorse. In the last act, Philip, maddened by the thought that his wife is unfaithful, and knowing that the man whom he suspects is concealed within his wife's oratory, orders the entrance thereto to be bricked up. After a scene of terrible suspense, the object of Philip's jealousy is released, and the jealous husband, relieved at finding that the man is his half-brother, whom he had left for dead eight years previously, allows him to depart, and a fairly happy ending brings the drama to a close. There is nothing very much in the play, and, although the scene was laid amid romantic surroundings, it might just as well have been in England as in Andalusia or

PHILIP.

First acted at the Lyceum on 7th February, 1874.

Count Philip de Miraflore	Mr. Henry Irving.
Count Juan de Miraflore	Mr. John Clayton.
Count de Flamarens	Mr. H. B. Conway.
Baron de Beauport	Mr. F. Charles.
Saint Aignan	Mr. Brennend.
Monsieur de Brimont	Mr. Beaumont.
Thibault	Mr. John Carter.
Count Kitchakoff	Mr. Harwood.
Count de Charente	Mr. Branscombe.
Marquis de Lallemont	Mr. Collett.
Monsieur Virey	Mr. Tapping.
Servant	Mr. A. Lenepven.
Madame de Privoisin	Miss Virginia Francis.
Countess de Miraflore	Miss G. Pauncefort.
Louise	Miss St. Ange.
Inez	Miss J. Henri.
Marie	Miss Isabel Bateman.

Act I. Exterior of Ancient Moorish Castle in Andalusia. Parapet overlooking the Guadalquiver. Act II. Salon of Madame de Privoisin in Paris. Act III. Exterior of the Chateau de St. Leon in Brittany. Act IV. The Boudoir and Oratory of Madame de St. Leon.

France. The critics complained that there was "no Spanish colouring to the dialogue," but a more serious fault was the lack of novelty. The dramatic incident of the last act, first related in one of Balzac's novels, had already done duty on the stage in a French drama which, adapted by Morris Barnett under the title of "The Married Unmarried," had been produced, within the memory of many playgoers, by Charles Kean, when the process of bricking-up the too ardent lover was shown to the audience with abundance of harrowing detail. Mr. Aïdé's play possessed much literary grace, but, despite the supposititious murder of the first act—in reality, a prologue—and the walling-up incident of the last act, it was not a good drama. Still, Irving drew much credit to himself by his impersonation of the leading part. "The play owes its most intellectual attraction to the fine acting of Mr. Irving, who gives artistic and impassioned expression to the love, pride, anger, jealousy, and high-souled sense of honour which are the chief constituents in the character of Philip," said the *Morning Post*, "the transport of indignant rage flashing from the face of the young Spaniard, and thrilling every nerve and fibre of his frame in his quarrel with his recreant brother, is only to be equalled by the terror, anguish, and remorse with which Philip surveyed the prostrate body of the kinsman whom he is supposed to have slain."

Even with such a slight and unsatisfactory part—in comparison with his preceding characters at the Lyceum—Irving attracted a vast amount of attention. His position at this period is clearly shown by an article in the *Globe* on the Monday following the production of Mr. Aïdé's play. "The progress of Mr. Irving," it said, "cannot but be watched with interest by all who care for the welfare of the stage. He is among the few actors of the time who can bring a strong intellectual force to the consideration of many problems of their art, and in certain qualities of strength and intensity he stands alone. His presence on the stage carries always the conviction of earnestness and serious purpose, which, coming amongst much that is only half-hearted and of vague meaning, is absolutely startling in its effect. Everything done is felt to have been done deliberately. Critics may differ as to the merit of the conception, but it is impossible to complain that it is not clearly and definitely set before them. The motive is always consistent, the expression always precise, and in these two facts alone there is much to distinguish Mr. Irving from the larger number of his fellows. Thus it happens that what he does, whether rightly or wrongly, serves at least to awaken interest and criticism. It is impossible to feel indifferent to what bears so strong an impress of individuality, and if the interpretation given is not felt to be true and accurate, there is at least sufficient strength in it to suggest anew the problems with which the actor has tried to grapple." The same observant critic indicated a curious belief which had grown up concerning the actor in regard to the audiences at the Lyceum which "have so often beheld Mr. Irving remorseful for murders actually committed that it is a little difficult to believe in his innocence now; and when it was found that Philip really had not slain his brother, the sense of relief was not wholly unmixed with a measure of incredulity". One can quite imagine that the impersonator of Mathias and Eugene Aram had inspired certain people with the idea that he could seldom be innocent on the stage. It took a number of years to remove that impression.

On Monday, 1st June, the actor gave fresh proof of his untiring spirit, his unceasing desire to improve upon his previous work. On that evening, "Charles the First" was revived, and the occasion called forth fresh criticism and all of a favourable nature. The *Daily Telegraph* had a long article referring once more, in the most laudatory terms, to the play and the chief player. Having called attention to the worth of Mr. Wills's drama, it proceeded: "No better proof can be given of its value than the cheers which burst out at the conclusion of the second act, and the streaming eyes giving evidence of the author's subtle power over the heart. There are new reasons, however, for strongly and earnestly recommending a renewed acquaintance with this play, and they will be found chiefly in the acting which, throughout its long career, was never better than at this moment. Familiarity with the work does not now, as in so many instances, suggest a fatigue and distaste for it. All have approached their task with new energy, fresh fire, and refined taste. Critical essays of some worth have been written on the Charles the First of Mr. Henry Irving—of all his performances, the most genuine, the least mannered, and the most highly cultivated. His warmest admirers will find in the revived Charles fresh motive for honest praise. Never before has he expressed with such artistic nicety the o'ershadowing of pathos over the sad King's life or the struggle against inevitable fate." There was more to the same purport, and the Queen of Miss Isabel Bateman was cordially approved. The cast was materially strengthened for the revival by the appearance and acting of John Clayton, a most admirable Cromwell. There was also a new Moray in Mr. H. B. Conway. Monday, 22nd June, 1874, was fixed for the last night of the season and the benefit of the leading actor, who elected to appear in the widely-contrasted characters of Eugene Aram and Jeremy Diddler.

CHAPTER XI.

1874-1875.

Irving's first appearance in London as Hamlet—Melancholy forebodings not justified—The poor scenery for this revival of "Hamlet"—The Lyceum pit—Irving's feelings on the first night—An "electrical" effect on the audience—Clement Scott's vivid description—The hundredth representation—A pleasant supper—Irving's success influences other managers—Death of "Colonel" Bateman—Irving's tribute to his old manager—Tennyson and Frith on Irving's Hamlet—Sir Edward Russell's essay on Irving as Hamlet.

Before he was thirty-six years of age, Irving had borne the brunt of much criticism. But it was honest criticism—not mere abuse, such as was, very soon afterwards, heaped upon him—and he had profited by it. He made an artistic triumph in "Richelieu"; and the public applauded his improved impersonation for more consecutive performances than had ever been given of the play. This feat was all the more remarkable, seeing that it was achieved despite comparison and despite the hide-bound tradition of "point-making". He had, however, apart from establishing himself firmly with the public, obtained recognition as an actor who could think for himself. Even since his death, his detractors—and he had many after his death, as in his life—have admitted the possession of intellect. They conceded this point, in 1874, when they could not admit anything else that was a virtue. They granted that at any rate he was original. His Mathias, Charles, and Eugene Aram were creations in the literal, as well as in the French, meaning of the term, and his conception of the character of Richelieu differed from that of his predecessors and was afterwards recognised as a great impersonation. This was all very well, said his enemies, but it was no matter after all, for Mathias was not to be compared even to the well-known characters in the classic drama, and Bulwer Lytton was not Shakespeare. All of which was perfectly true. So that when it was whispered that the new actor intended to attempt to play Hamlet, the rumour was received with incredulity. As the report grew into certainty, it spread consternation in the camp of the enemy. Surprise gave way to indignation, and the definite date for the trial was treated with a combination of wrath and contempt. But the wiseacres, who by this time should have respected the determination of the player, even though they could not admire his art, were rash in prophesying disaster. As for the statement that Henry Irving had once played Hamlet somewhere in the provinces, such ridiculous experiments might go down in Manchester or wherever it was, but London, forsooth! Just let him try! Well, he did try, and with the same grim determination which never forsook him, and with the same inward sense of humour which enabled him to endure trials to which no other actor was ever subjected. Even his friend, the manager—and Bateman was a real friend, as Irving frequently acknowledged—was as doubtful about "Hamlet" as he had been about "The Bells". "What I did play, by my own desire, and against his—Bateman's—belief in its success, was Hamlet; for you must know that at that time there was a motto among managers—'Shakespeare spells ruin'." This saying, it may be mentioned, originated with the manager of Drury Lane, F. B. Chatterton, who, in September, 1873, had produced "Antony and Cleopatra" with magnificent scenery—and disastrous results. His spectacular revival of "Sardanapalus" had no better fate. Hence arose his lament, "Shakespeare spells ruin and Byron bankruptcy," which became a stock-phrase in the theatrical world.

So that, with the adverse criticism in advance to which Irving was subjected and the disaster of Drury Lane as an example, it would be unfair to blame Bateman for his lack of enthusiasm about "Hamlet". He tried a revival of "The Bells," with which the season began on 28th September, 1874; and, on Saturday, 31st October, the great venture took place. Bateman's absolute want of faith in the experiment was conclusively shown in the scantiness of the production from the scenic point of view. He had backed up "Charles the First" and "Richelieu" with considerable liberality in regard to scenery and costume. But he left "Hamlet" to shift for itself, the total expenditure in this case amounting to a poor hundred pounds, although, in various managerial pronouncements, he had whetted the public appetite by hints as to "months of careful preparation," and similar cajolements which would have no effect nowadays. Such was the poverty of the production that even Irving's stern adversary, Dutton Cook, was moved to point out that there was "no particular desire to garnish the play with spangles, with needless upholstery, or with swarms of super-

HAMLET.

Revived at the Lyceum on 31st October, 1874.

Hamlet	Mr. Henry Irving.
King	Mr. Thomas Swinbourne.
Polonius	Mr. Chippendale.
Laertes	Mr. E. Leathes.
Horatio	Mr. G. Neville.
Ghost	Mr. Thomas Mead.
Osric	Mr. H. B. Conway.
Rosencrantz	Mr. Webber.
Guildenstern	Mr. Beaumont.
Marcellus	Mr. F. Clements.
Bernardo	Mr. Tapping.
Francisco	Mr. Harwood.
1st Actor	Mr. Beveridge.
2nd Actor	Mr. Norman.
Priest	Mr. Collett.
Messenger	Mr. Branscombe.
1st Gravedigger	Mr. Compton.
2nd Gravedigger	Mr. Chapman.
Gertrude	Miss G. Pauncefort.
Player Queen	Miss Hampden.
Ophelia	Miss Isabel Bateman.

Act I., Scene 1. Elsinore. A platform before the Castle. Scene 2. A Room of State in the Castle. Scene 3. A Room in Polonius's House. Scene 4. The platform. Scene 5. A more remote part. Act II., Scene 1. A Room in Polonius's House. Scene 2. A Room of State in the Castle. Act III., Scene 1. The same. Scene 2. A Room in the Castle. Scene 3. Another Room in the same. Act IV., Scene 1. A Room in the Castle. Act V., Scene 1. A Churchyard. Scene 2. Outside the Castle. Scene 3. A Hall in the Castle.

numeraries. The scenic decorations are reasonably appropriate, but do not pretend to be of luxurious quality: there is thriftiness, indeed, in employing the view of the churchyard in which Eugene Aram was wont nightly to expire in great agonies a season or two ago as the background to the representation of the interment of Ophelia." Irving had to depend upon himself, upon his own unaided efforts, for success in this culminating point of his career. Failure now would have meant disaster from which recovery would have been difficult in the extreme, if not absolutely impossible. His ambition did not desert him and he knew that he had the faith of the public. This was his great consolation and the final spur to his endeavour. If the manager had announced, instead of "months of careful preparation" as applied to the playhouse, "years of careful preparation" on the part of the actor, he would have been near the truth. For the Hamlet of 1864 was by no means the work of a novice, and, in the intervening ten years, Henry Irving had not been idle. He had won his great fight to a certain point, but his Hamlet was a matter of vital importance to him. Apart from other considerations, it differed from the impersonations of the majority of celebrated actors, who, before coming to London, had become celebrated in the country for their interpretations of the leading parts in Shakespeare. They had, as a result, a fixed idea as to how far they could go in the bid for applause and what effects they could reasonably be expected to make.

Irving's interpretation was an untried performance and one that was to be the touchstone of his career. However, his faith in himself never wavered, and the interest of the public was so great that the patrons of the pit assembled four hours before the opening of the doors at seven o'clock in their eagerness to see the new Hamlet. In those days, the occupants of the pit, apart from the professional critics, were the real judges of dramatic art, and their verdict on a first night was of vital moment to the success of an actor or a play. The pit occupied almost the entire ground floor; orchestra stalls had not come into fashion—pit-stalls were introduced into the Lyceum in 1856. So that the compliment of an assemblage at the pit-door at three o'clock in the afternoon was by no means an empty one. Nor were these earnest students of the drama wanting in enthusiasm for the actor to whom, as they well knew, the result of that evening was fraught with gravity. But they were inclined to be reserved in their judgment. He was greeted with great warmth when he made his entrance in the first act, but the simplicity of his appearance amazed his audience. As the readers of this history are aware, Irving had, in the year 1864, represented Kemble as Hamlet, and he could now, had he chosen, have appeared as an exact fac-simile of Lawrence's famous portrait. But he relied upon himself, and he did not now adopt—as he had done in Manchester—the fair wig which owed its initiative to Fechter. He discarded the elaborate funereal trappings of the old-fashioned Hamlet, and the gigantic order of the Danish Elephant which had been conspicuous as part of the costume of Fechter—his immediate predecessor in the part—was not to be seen. The best personal description of Irving as Hamlet on this eventful night, and of his reception in the part, was written by Clement Scott, who was now as enthusiastic as he had been condemnatory in regard to Richelieu. "We see before us," he wrote, immediately after the event, "a man and a prince, in thick-ribbed silk, and a jacket or paletot, edged with fur; a tall, imposing figure, so well-dressed that nothing distracts the eye from the wonderful face; a costume rich but simple, and relieved only by a heavy chain of gold; but, above and beyond all, a troubled, wearied face. The black, disordered hair is carelessly tossed about the forehead, but the fixed and rapt attention of the whole house is directed to the eyes of Hamlet: the eyes which denote the trouble—which tell of the distracted mind. Here are 'the windy suspiration of forcèd breath,' 'the fruitful river in the eye,' the dejected 'haviour of the visage'. So subtle is the actor's art, so intense is his application, and so daring his disregard of conventionality, that the first act ends with disappointment."

This was not a hopeful beginning, especially for an actor who knew that when Garrick left the stage after Hamlet's first scene with the Ghost the applause of the audience was deafening and was continued until the two characters reappeared. Almost two acts of the tragedy were allowed to pass in silence at the Lyceum before the spectators began to understand the actor and what he had in his mind. At the end of the first act, Irving left the stage with a feeling of depression, which was not to be wondered at. But this feeling was caused by the thought that he had failed to reach the ideal for which he had been striving. " I felt," as he afterwards related about this first-night, "that the audience did not go with me until the first meeting with Ophelia, when they changed towards me entirely." From this point in the play, his personation was recognised by the spectators as the most human Hamlet that they had ever seen. His success in the play scene was—electrical. There is no other word which so exactly describes it, and, as so many people seem to think that this kind of tremendous, instantaneous, overwhelming effect caused by an actor is akin to genius, or the direct outcome of that badly defined gift, it may be fitting to mention the bare fact, before giving a critical account of the impersonation. It should also be recorded that the audience remained until after a quarter to one o'clock on the Sunday morning—at which hour the curtain fell. This circumstance enabled Clement Scott to indulge in some of that "picturesque reporting," as he called his criticisms, for which he was noted. But Mr. Scott, in those early days of his career, was far more than a picturesque reporter—he loved the stage and all that was highest in its art. He was, above all, an enthusiast, and his criticisms—reviews, reports, pen-portraits, call them what you will—are certainly valuable as truthful impressions. We have, in the illustrations of this biography, two portraits of Irving as Hamlet, while Onslow Ford's beautiful statue shows, in addition, the delicate hands for which Irving was so distinguished. These will speak for themselves to future students of stage history. Aided by Scott's impressionist pen-picture, we can get an accurate view of Irving as he appeared as Hamlet on this memorable first night. It is not necessary to quote the article in its entirety, but its salient passages are as follows:—

"Those who have seen other Hamlets are aghast. Mr. Irving is missing his points, he is neglecting his opportunities. Betterton's face turned as white as his neck-cloth, when he saw the Ghost. Garrick thrilled the house when he followed the spirit. Some cannot hear Mr. Irving, others find him indistinct. Many declare roundly he cannot read Shakespeare. There are others who generously observe that Hamlets are not judged by the first act; but over all, disputants or enthusiasts, has already been thrown an indescribable spell. None can explain it; but all are now spell-bound. The Hamlet is 'thinking aloud,' as Hazlitt wished. He is as much of the gentleman and scholar as possible, and 'as little of the actor'.

"We in the audience see the mind of Hamlet. We care little what he does, how he walks, when he draws his sword. We can almost realise the workings of his brain. His soliloquies are not spoken down at the footlights to the audience. Hamlet is looking into a glass, into 'his mind's eye, Horatio!' His eyes are fixed apparently on nothing, though ever eloquent. He gazes on vacancy and communes with his conscience. Those only who have closely watched Hamlet through the first act could adequately express the impression made. But it has affected the whole audience—the Kemble lovers, the Kean admirers, and the Fechter rhapsodists. They do not know how it is, but they are spell-bound with the incomparable expression of moral poison.

"The second act ends with nearly the same result. There is not an actor living who on attempting Hamlet has not made his points in the speech, 'Oh! what a rogue and peasant slave am I!' But Mr. Irving's intention is not to make points, but to give a consistent reading of a Hamlet who 'thinks aloud'. For one instant he falls 'a-cursing like a very drab, a scullion'; but only to relapse into a deeper despair, into more profound thought. He is not acting, he is not splitting the ears of the groundlings; he is an artist concealing his art; he is talking to himself; he is thinking aloud. Hamlet is suffering from moral poison and the spell woven about the audience is more mysterious and incomprehensible in the second act than the first.

"In the third act the artist triumphs. No more doubt, no more hesitation, no more discussion. If Hamlet is to be played like a scholar and a gentleman, and not like an actor, this is the Hamlet. The scene with Ophelia turns the scale, and the success is from this instant complete. But we must insist that it was not the triumph of an actor alone; it was the realisation of all that the artist has been foreshadowing. Mr. Irving made no sudden and striking effect, as did Mr. Kean. 'Whatever nice faults might be found on this score,' says Hazlitt, 'they are amply redeemed by the manner of his coming back after he has gone to the extremity of the stage, from a pang of parting tenderness to press his lips to Ophelia's hand. It had an electrical effect on the house.' Mr. Irving did not make his success by any theatrical coup, but by the expression of the pent-up agony of a harassed and disappointed man. According to Mr. Irving, the very sight of Ophelia is the keynote of the outburst of his moral disturbance. He loves this woman; 'forty thousand brothers' could not express his overwhelming passion, and think what might have happened if he had been allowed to love her, if his ambition had been realised. The more he looks at Ophelia, the more he curses the irony of fate. He is surrounded, overwhelmed, and crushed by trouble, annoyance, and spies.

"They are watching him behind the arras. Ophelia is set on to assist their plot. They are driving him mad, though he is only feigning madness. What a position for a harassed creature to endure! They are all against him. Hamlet alone in the world is born to 'set it right'. He is in the height and delirium of moral anguish. The distraction of the unhinged mind, swinging and banging about like a door; the infinite love and tenderness of the man who longs to be soft and gentle to the woman he adores: the horror and hatred of being trapped, and watched, and spied upon, were all expressed with consummate art. Every voice cheered, and the points Mr. Irving had lost as an actor were amply atoned for by his earnestness as an artist. Fortified with this genuine and heart-stirring applause, he rose to the occasion. He had been understood at last. To have broken down here would have been disheartening; but he had triumphed.

"The speech to the players was Mr. Irving's second success. He did not sit down and lecture. There was no affectation or princely priggishness in the scene at all. He did not give his ideas of art as a prince to an actor, but as an artist to an artist. Mr. Irving, to put it colloquially, buttonholed the First Player. He spoke to him confidentially, as one man to another. He stood up, and took the actor into his confidence, with a half-deferential smile, as much as to say, 'I do not attempt to dictate to an artist, but still these are my views on art'. But with all this there was a princely air, a kindly courtesy, and an exquisite expression of refinement which astonished the house as much from its daring as its truth. Mr. Irving was gaining ground with marvellous rapidity. His exquisite expression of friendship for Horatio was no less beautiful than his stifled passion for Ophelia. For the one he was the pure and constant friend, for the other the baffled lover.

"Determined not to be conquered by his predecessors, he made a signal success in the play scene. He acted it with an impulsive energy beyond all praise. Point after point was made in a whirlwind of excitement. He lured, he tempted, he trapped the King, he drove out his wicked uncle conscience-stricken and baffled, and with an hysterical yell of triumph he sank down, 'this expectancy and rose of the fair State,' in the very throne which ought to have been his, and which his rival had just vacated. It is difficult to describe the excitement occasioned by the acting in this scene. When the King had been frighted, the stage was cleared instantaneously. No one in the house knew how the people had gone off. All eyes were fixed on Hamlet and the King; all were forgetting the real play and the mock play, following up every move of the antagonists, and, from constant watching, they were almost as exhausted as Hamlet was when he sank a conqueror into the neglected throne.

"It was all over now. Hamlet had won. He would take the Ghost's word for a thousand pounds. The clouds cleared from his brow. He was no longer in doubt or despair. He was the victor after this mental struggle. The effects of the moral poison had passed away, and he attacked Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in the recorder scene with a sarcasm and a withering scorn which were among the results of a reaction after pent-up agony. But this tremendous act was even now not yet over. There was the closet-scene still to come—a scene which still further illustrates the daring defiance of theatrical tradition exhibited by Mr. Irving. If the Hamlet was to be a mental study it should be one to the last. The actor who could conquer prejudices so far, was bound to continue, and when the audience looked at the arras for the pictures, or round the necks of the actors and actresses for the counterfeit presentment of two brothers, they found nothing.

"The nervousness and paralysing excitement occasioned by such an evening, made its mark on the actors. It was too great an effort. The fear of being shut out from a glass of beer before midnight frightened the audience, and there were a few minutes of doubt and anxiety. But art conquered, and the audience obeyed. . . .

"It may be that the intellectual manager will yet have to see how far "Hamlet" can be curtailed to suit this luxurious and selfish age. There are not many audiences which will relinquish their beer for the sake of art. This was a very special occasion. But the supreme moment for the audience had come when the curtain fell. If they had sacrificed their refreshment, waiting there, as many of them had done, since three o'clock in the afternoon, they had done something for art. They had, at least, deserved the pleasure of cheering the artist who had inspired them. It was no 'succes d'estime'. The actor of the evening had, in the teeth of tradition, in the most unselfish manner, and in the most highly artistic fashion convinced his hearers. William Hazlitt, the critic, was right. Here was the Hamlet who thinks aloud; here was the scholar, and so little of the actor. So they threw crowns, and wreaths, and bouquets, at the artist, and the good people felt that this artistic assistance had come at a turning point in the history of English dramatic art. . . . The position of Mr. Irving, occasionally wavering and pleasantly hesitating in the balance, has now been firmly established. The Hamlet of Henry Irving is a noble contribution to dramatic art."

The Hamlet fever which set in on the night of 31st October, 1874, raged for many months, and ended only with the last night of the revival, by which time two hundred consecutive performances had been recorded. The hundredth representation occurred on Friday, 26th February, 1875. It was celebrated by a supper which was given in the saloon of the theatre. The late Edward Pigott, the Examiner of Plays, proposed the chief toast, and the health of the hero of the hour was drunk with hearty good will, the company numbering over a hundred literary men, including some of the chief critics. A noteworthy effect of the success of "Hamlet" at the Lyceum was the change which took place in the public taste, and, consequently, in the programmes of several theatres. For instance, when the hundredth night of "Hamlet" had arrived, Shakespeare was being represented at three other theatres in London, the specialities of two of which had hitherto been burlesque and opéra-bouffe, and of the third equestrian performances—"A Midsummer Night's Dream," at the Gaiety, "As You Like It" at the Opera Comique, and "The Merchant of Venice" at the Holborn Amphitheatre; while the last-named play was in preparation at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, the dainty home of Robertsonian comedy. Phelps, as Bottom, was the feature of the Gaiety revival, and Mr. and Mrs. Kendal were the Rosalind and Orlando at the Opera Comique, Mr. Hermann Vezin being the Jaques.

The long run of the tragedy at the Lyceum came to an end on 29th June, 1875. During all that time, the theatre had only been closed for one week, and that in consequence of the death, on 22nd March, of Mr. Bateman, Irving's friend as well as manager. Afterwards, in a speech at the termination of the first night of the revival of "Macbeth," Irving made this graceful allusion to the old Colonel: "In my pride and pleasure at your approval, I cannot but remember the friend whose faith in me was so firm, a friend to whom my triumphs were as dear—aye, dearer, I believe, than had they been his own. The announcement last autumn that I, a young actor, was thought fitted to attempt Hamlet came from a warm and generous heart, and I cannot but deeply feel that he to whose unceasing toil and unswerving energy we owe in great measure the steadfast restoration of the poetic drama to the stage—I cannot but regret that he will never meet me, as he has done on so many occasions, to confirm your approval with affectionate enthusiasm and tears of joy." The death of Bateman was a great loss to the actor in more ways than one. It left him, for instance, open to unjustifiable attack, since an actor cannot always be defending himself, and, by the death of Bateman, Irving lost a doughty champion. "Hamlet," however, continued to prosper, and so famous had the actor become, that he drew all ranks of people to the theatre, including many who had forsaken the playhouse for several years. All artistic and literary London crowded to the Lyceum to see Irving as Hamlet. Tennyson admitted that he "liked it better than Macready's," although it was "not a perfect Hamlet; the pathetic side of him is well done, and the acting original". Again, W. P. Frith considered Irving's Hamlet superior to Macready's. "In a few characters," he says, in his Autobiography, "such as Virginius, William Tell, Rob Roy, and some others, Macready was, I think, unapproachable; but to compare his Hamlet or Shylock with Irving's rendering of those characters would be disastrous for Macready." Of course, there was much controversy concerning the new Hamlet, but, on the whole, it was distinctly in favour of Irving.

During the first three weeks of the tragedy at the Lyceum, one of the most masterly essays in dramatic criticism of modern days was written by Edward R. Russell, and published in the Liverpool *Daily Post*. It was subsequently issued in pamphlet form, with the title, "Irving as Hamlet". It is now, and for many years it has been, difficult to obtain a copy of this essay. This may possibly be the reason why other biographies have passed it over, and why some have only alluded to it in a few words. It is a clear exposition of the character, as conceived by Irving and as played by him. It is one of the most illuminating essays in the entire history of dramatic criticism. No apology is needed for drawing upon so invaluable a document, but regret may be expressed that it cannot, owing to its length, be reprinted, in this book, in its entirety :—

> "While believing that Hamlet may be successfully played with almost any physique which is not obnoxiously unromantic, we avow the opinion that such a physique as Irving's—nervous, excitable, and pliant, suggestive of much thought and dreamy intellect, yet agile and natural and individual in its movements—comes nearer the normal English pre-conception of such a character than one more characterised by physical beauty and gesticulatory and elocutionary grace. In moments of high excitement Irving rapidly plods across and across the stage with a gait peculiar to him —a walk somewhat resembling that of a fretful man trying to get very

quickly over a ploughed field. In certain passages his voice has a querulous piping impatience which cannot be reconciled with stage elegance. But there is no reason why Hamlet should not have had these peculiarities; and if we are to see him really living in the midst of what has come upon him, the genius of the actor who accomplishes this all-important feat as only genius can, will be distinctly helped by any little ineffaceable peculiarities which, while not inconsistent with the character, give the representation of it a stamp of personal individuality. This, though a minor characteristic, has greatly distinguished Irving's acting in all his noted parts, although the merit has not been much recognised in the surface criticism of the day. In each case—in Digby Grant, Mathias, Eugene Aram, Philip, even in the necessarily stilted King Charles, and, in spite of too young-looking a countenance, most pre-eminently in Richelieu—play-goers have felt that they have come to know a new and distinct and actual person, just as really and with just as true a sensation of novelty and kindled curiosity as when an interesting acquaintance is made at a dinner-table or in travelling. The secret lies in a bold combination of tragedy with character acting, which Irving has been the first to essay. He shows the nicest instinct in the degree to which he pushes it. Those who should expect his Hamlet to be as minutely individual as his Richelieu would show almost as much coarseness of perception as the queer critics who praised him for avoiding the temptation to make the death of Hamlet as horribly realistic as the death in 'The Bells'. But even in his Hamlet there is a strongly marked and courageously preserved individuality, which is more helpful to the due effect of the play than any amount of insipid personal beauty and grace.

"When plain incongruities have been avoided, and an impression of living personality instead of mere stage assumption has been created, there is little more that manner and idiosyncrasy can do to illuminate Hamlet. The rest must be acting—thought, conception, imagination, finding expression through the various channels of technical skill, and in this great undertaking Irving has succeeded, mainly because of the simpleness and singleness of mind with which he has addressed to it his well-disciplined powers. . . .

"Remembering past Hamlets—good and great as many have been—it seems to us that there remained yet one new though obvious conception to be realised. Every great actor has been anxious to show how he could play Hamlet; no one has quite succeeded in showing how Hamlet would have played it. And this is what Irving does. It is some years since Edwin Booth, who most nearly approached this natural and touching conception, was in England, and the impressions under which we name him are therefore not fresh. That he is the best or at least the truest Hamlet, except Irving, we have, however, no doubt. He is so unequal an actor that his other performances give no indication of the grace, the intellect, the poignant nature of his Hamlet; and the highest praise that can be accorded to Irving is that to the princeliness, the ease, the gravity, the intellect, and the naturalness of Booth—all of which he possesses, though a little more deeply stamped with personal manner—he adds these two remarkably contrasted qualities: a sort of domestic sensibility of the calamities and perplexities by which Hamlet is inundated, and a wild poetry of aspect and speech which till now—unless indeed by the old actors before our time—has not been even hinted except by painters. The root of all, as we divine, is a simple, steady resolution on Irving's part to be what Hamlet must have been, and to let the rest take care of itself. If being Hamlet should lead to good points, they would be welcome, and the applause evoked by them would be as delicious to Irving as to another; but to make points by ceasing to be Hamlet was to him an impossible profanation. When certain critics tell him he still lacks the characteristics of the great French actors, they little appreciate his avoidance of all that is worst in French tragedy, and have failed to perceive how deeply he has drunk of the spring of all that is best in French comedy—finding in it a tragic inspiration which it might least have been expected to yield. . . . A little common sense is worth a good deal of subtlety here; and to appreciate what Hamlet goes through, without preconceptions—which is what we imagine Irving to have done—is the best way of raising to the highest point the human interest of the character. In reading much of the criticism on Hamlet, one feels that it is written in an artificial manner by persons who have never really conceived what has happened to the hero, and are not properly impressed with the difficulty of his extricating himself from the circumstances in which he is placed. It is positively laughable to hear Hamlet sneered at for infirmity of purpose by writers who probably never in their lives had a more serious question to settle than whether they should give up a house at the Midsummer or Christmas quarter. Nor is it much less ludicrous to read in an ambitious critique, that Irving as Hamlet shows an unmanly degree of dejection. As if having to kill your mother's second husband within a few months of your father's murder, upon the injunction of your father's ghost, were a quite ordinary piece of work by which no well-regulated mind would suffer itself to be disturbed!

"The tone and spirit of the whole play, and of Irving's impersonation, and of the Lyceum representation, is at antipodes with such ideas. The mounting of the play has been studiously kept from being too splendid. It is regal, but eminently domestic. The scenes without, where the ghost is first encountered, are as wild as the text suggests they should be, but the apartments of the palace all look habitable. They are not brand new. They are not mere audience chambers. They are usable and used. The *habitués* move about as if they were at home, and at night they light themselves about with torches. It is complained that Irving leaves one apartment torch in hand, and immediately enters his mother's chamber with a bedroom lamp. What more natural? The lamp is no doubt left without the chamber on a slab, to be lit at the torch which is carried through the dark stone passages, and put out by knocking it against the wall or on the foot when the lamp is taken in hand. Such details are not of the first consequence, but they are important when the chief actor has seized the idea that, to sustain the imagination in the direction Shakespeare indicates, an air of castle domesticity must be kept up, so that the conception of a house blighted by the occurrences set forth in the action, and finally enumerated in the speech of Horatio which we have quoted above, may be the background of all Hamlet's dramatic effects. Even the melodious but primitive harps which sound at the entrance of King and Queen in their comparatively simple state, serve the general purpose which the new Hamlet has kept steadily in view.

"That purpose has, however, been most brilliantly served by a new and clear reading of a hitherto obscure aspect of Hamlet's character.

"Irving is no mature dreamer, long accustomed to metaphysical problems, and fond of putting them into fine language. He is not a precocious and priggish young philosopher airing his cleverness. Nor is he a mere master of theatrical devices, flooding the stage with tears perhaps at the very moment when Hamlet complains that he cannot weep, or exemplifying that common form of strenuous but imperfect absorption in a character which practically amounts to making its different phases inconsistent with each other. He is what Hamlet was. His mind has been enlarged and refined by much vagrant contemplation, but has never lost its exquisite simplicity, its fresh susceptibility. He is extremely self-observant, not in vanity or complacency, but because self-study is to him a fascinating avenue through which to approach all other knowledge of life and character. And from this point Irving has advanced to a detail absolutely new, and positively regenerating to some passages, if not to the general scope of the play. He has noticed that Hamlet not merely is simple-minded, frankly susceptible, and naturally self-contemplative, but has a trick—not at all uncommon in persons whose most real life is an inner one—*of fostering and aggravating his own excitements.* This discovery of Irving is a stroke of genius, and will identify his Hamlet as long as the memory of it endures. The idea will be handed down, and the mechanical execution of it will probably be imitated; but the vivid, flashing, half-foolish, half-inspired, hysterical power of Irving in the passages where it is developed is a triumph of idiosyncrasy, which, even with the help of the traditions he is founding, is not very likely to be achieved by any other actor. Critics who carry about their own standards as other artisans carry pocket foot-rules, may pronounce this feature of Irving's Hamlet unmanly; but it is the business of a great actor to play Hamlet, not to improve him. If he was partly hysterical, and aggravated half-consciously his own excitements, the actor who plays him, and sees this, must not hide it; and if he show it to us, we shall see in his performance the truth, and probably the beauty, of a phase of Shakespeare's creation which has hitherto been neglected. . . . Few of us have Hamlet's sensitive constitution. Still fewer have his stong provocations to crime. None of us are agitated by supernatural visitations. But we can all understand, as we watch Irving, how such a man as Hamlet would be affected by such influences. With Irving the tragedy is as little a show-piece as it would have been to a real Hamlet. It is life and death you are gazing at while he is on the stage. The royal house of Denmark has a black shadow over it, and a bright, fresh young prince, 'the rose and expectancy of the fair State,' is doomed to peer amidst the gloom, now peopled with his own imaginings, and anon disturbed by a lurid and fitful supernatural light, for the truth of its origin, and the means of dissipating it by vengeance. Faithful in this pursuit, Irving defies alike the temptations of tradition and allurements of a text which invites declamation. He will not be drawn out of the character. And the character lives in him as it probably never lived before.

"Upon one point we differ from, or at least cannot wholly agree with, the first dramatic critic of the day, who, writing in the *Times*, has picked out, as the leading characteristic of Irving's Hamlet, a repugnance to cruelty. He says:—

"'If we rightly interpret Mr. Irving's performance, his reply to this question is to the effect that the nature of Hamlet is essentially tender, loving, and merciful. He is not a weak man called upon to do something beyond his powers, but he is a kindly man urged to do a deed, which, according to the "lex talionis," may be righteous, but which is yet cruel. In Mr. Henry Taylor's "Philip van Artevelde," one of the personages asks Philip, in order to ascertain his fitness to become a ruler in very stormy times "Can you be cruel?" thereby implying that without something like an element of cruelty in his nature his appointed work cannot be effectually done. According to Mr. Irving—as we suppose—it is to the utter lack of cruelty in his nature that Hamlet's short-comings are to be attributed. He is a judge to whom the black cap is so abhorrent that he can never persuade himself to put it on. Mercy will always usurp the seat of Justice when her usurpation is least desirable. He is capable of any amount of sorrow—sorrow for his dead father, sorrow for Ophelia. An undercurrent of tearfulness runs through all his discourse, but of unmitigated hate he is unsusceptible, if we answer in the negative Shylock's question, "Hates any man the thing he would not kill?"—more unsusceptible than he himself suspects. The hideous crime revealed by the ghost may cause him to "fall a-cursing like a drab," and bestow upon his uncle a large number of ugly adjectives; but for all that he does not like to kill him.'

"Now of the tenderness and lovingness of Hamlet's disposition we are as well persuaded as the writer of this passage. That Hamlet could not possibly have been cruel without just provocation is certain; and it is not less so that gratuitous cruelty is a quality impossible to be associated with the character as impersonated by Irving. But of any conscious revulsion against cruel vengeance upon his uncle there is no sign in the play, and we observed none in the player. If it is to the 'utter lack of cruelty in his nature' that Hamlet's shortcomings are to be attributed, 'according to Irving,' how shall we account for the restoration of the rarely played scene, in which Hamlet abstains from killing Claudius at his prayers, because that would send him straight to heaven, whereas his victim, Hamlet's father, was suddenly slain, with all his imperfections on his head? Only by a forced and untenable supposition that, in reciting the speech in a tone of vehement savagery, Irving means to convey the idea that Hamlet is playing a part to himself, and humouring his mercifulness behind a show of refined cruelty. . . . It is a mistake in philosophy, as well as in criticism, to see in the purblind motions of Hamlet towards a more advanced moral atmosphere, a clear and conscious aversion to a cruelty which by him, and all the men of his day, was deemed righteous and unexceptionable. And especially is it a mistake to read thus the performance of an actor who, by restoring and acting very powerfully the most savage scene in which Hamlet appears, shows that he is bent on facing all the seeming incongruities of the character, and means to succeed, not by presenting a sweet and elegant Hamlet of his own, but by a true representation of the much harassed and almost distraught young prince, whom Shakespeare's searching eye saw as he would have been, amidst the trouble and conflict into which he was plunged. . . .

"Afterwards, when Hamlet, by the contrivance of Polonius, meets Ophelia, we learn, in the scene in which Irving rises highest perhaps in tragic grandeur, that there are circumstances which may bring out, even when he is not alone, the strange ecstacy in which is Hamlet's nature, as this fine actor reads it, to expatiate. When he begins to talk to Ophelia he is on his guard. Other business than love-making is in his thoughts. An instinct warns him to shun the distractions and wooings of the passion. Yet the fair Ophelia is before him, and the love of forty thousand brothers is in his heart. He has no shield, no disguise, but his 'antic disposition'; and he puts it on. The rule with modern Hamlets is to pretend to be mad later, when they have perceived behind the arras the King and Polonius, lawful but despicable espials. This is not Irving's idea. It is in the coolness of the opening conversation that he affects the forgetfulness, the eccentricity, the insensibilty of derangement. His love peeps forth sadly, in a melancholy line or accent, here and there, but the general tone of his talk to the poor jilted Ophelia is mere baffling unaccountableness. The excitement, however, as it mounts, is evidently too much for him. The two strongest feelings he has ever had are at odds which shall be master. He is as self-watching by habit as he is impulsive in the passionate processess of his affections. He is accustomed, and knows he is accustomed, to yield himself up to overwhelming feelings. He now finds himself between two. He remembers well the irresistible tumult into which the sight of Ophelia used to throw him. He is puzzled by a sort of paralysis of the affection which he well knows still holds lordship in his bosom. He loves Ophelia; and with the old love; but not with the old tempestuousness. A stronger power has curbed and bitted his hitherto untameable passion. A vocation has been thrust upon him, which fully tasks his powers, and will probably expel for ever from his heart the capacity for domestic pleasure. As he hastily pierces here and there, with strong yet futile glances, the thick-gathering darkness of his situation, the time, though only a few moments, seems to those who watch Irving with understanding eyes, to cover an indefinite period of anxious and exciting thought. What can young Hamlet do, with the 'prettiness' of his life thus turned into an inferno, and with neither time to think, nor chance of thinking to any purpose? There is nothing for it but wild and whirling words, and these he utters amidst many strange, fitful glarings, and many a suffering pressure of the hand to his throbbing head. What is beauty? A temptress. What is Ophelia's honesty? A mere fleeting virtue, that can neither live nor inoculate her natural depravity. He did love her once—this in a momentary interval of melancholy sincerity—but she should not have believed him. Why should she be a breeder of sinners? For himself, though indifferent honest, he could accuse himself of such things, that it were better his mother had not borne him. What should such fellows as he—arrant knaves all—do crawling between earth and heaven? Then suddenly he sees Polonius and the King, and the climax comes. But not as hitherto usual, in the shape of pretended madness. Rather does his lunacy become all but real and pronounced. To all his other griefs, as if they were not enough, is added environment by spies. Nothing could so agonisingly cut to the inmost sense of one already almost distracted by agony. For a moment he is stern in self-defence. Her father is at home. Let the doors be shut upon him that he may play the fool only there. But these are the last words he can say with any degree of sanity. His first sudden 'farewell,' is a frantic ebullition of all-encompassing, all-racking pain. What was till now histrionic, passes, as the histrionic phase of highly strung natures easily does, into real frenzy. His words come faster and wilder. His eyes flash with a more sinister lightning as he gives Ophelia the plague of inevitable calumny for her dowry. Again 'farewell'; and now he rushes forth, but only to return laden, as it were, with a new armful of hastily gathered missiles of contumely. He is getting now to the very leavings of his mind. He has nothing to hurl at his love but the common-places of men against women. They paint, they jig, they amble, they lisp, and make their wantonness their ignorance. There shall be no more of it—and one almost feels that so furious and fiery a reformer may prevent it by flinging sheer terror about him, like brands from a conflagration. There shall be no more marriages. It hath made him mad, he says; and it is almost true. He flies—as if his head and feet were winged like Mercury's—his now for ever discarded love. A flash of frenzy, and he has quitted the scene. He leaves behind him the fair maiden who has ere now sucked the honey of his music vows, bemoaning her destiny, to have seen what she has seen, see what she sees. The audience, which this episode leaves petrified with a strange and seldom experienced feeling of exhaustion from pent excitement, may well show after a moment's pause, by rare demonstrations of enthusiasm, its vivid comprehension of a feat of pyschological acting which has hardly been paralleled in living memory. Forty lines or so of print contain the whole of the text, but in the acting there is a whole volume of power. . . . Irving's prince is young—essentially young—not merely in the matter of his own actual years, but in spirit. To this Hamlet belongs perpetual youth. He is of the temperament that will see a play at fifty as eagerly, and hear a speech as readily, as at twenty. Above all, his love of woman, his interest in her, his chivalry about her, his knowledge (like Will Honeycomb's) that we can only know she is not to be known, is of the kind which in some men never burns out, nor is snuffed out, nor flickers into noisome knowingness. It is this mood, in the form it takes on the threshold of manhood, that supplies Hamlet with the slights he hurls upon Ophelia; and this mood—the mood of perennial simplicity, brightness, excitableness, and juvenility—Irving's genius has unerringly singled out as that which Shakespeare meant to exhibit, acted upon by the exceptional circumstances of the weird tragedy of Elsinore. . . . As given on the first night by Irving, these soliloquies were conceived with so little attention to their essentially declamatory traditions, that he did not even study to end them with the usual perorative inflections, which give a distinct and satisfying sense of something concluded to the ear. This seems to be carrying purism of reality and character farther than is warranted by the structure and tone of Shakespeare's work; and with an actor of less power and slower instincts, it might have injured the general effect of the performance. . . .

"In all other respects than that of declamatory form, Irving's soliloquies are full of beauties, to enumerate which would be a very tedious form of homage. And, indeed, having made clear our idea of the conception upon which he has worked, it will now be easy to indicate with brevity the most conspicuous remaining instances in which in detail he has individualised his performance.

"One of these is the advice to the players, the pleasantness, grace, and point of which produce a thrill of satisfaction, such as only attends the very finest high comedy. Most Hamlets in this speech are saved by the words; Irving helps the words; and for once it is possible to say that there is not a passage in the play in which Hamlet runs counter to his own directions. Similarly graceful is Irving's conduct during the quiet parts of the play-scene. The key of it is in the remark made to Horatio before it begins—'I must be idle'. Irving is idle. Before the spectators enter, his demeanour is not subtle and contriving, but anxious, and his looks are haggard. He has set more than his life upon the cast. But when the King and Queen and courtiers enter, he becomes gay and insouciant. Ophelia's fan, with which he plays, is of peacocks' feathers, and as he lies at her feet patting his breast with it, at the words, 'Your majesty, and we that have free souls,' the feathers themselves are not lighter than his spirits seem. In his double-meaning replies to the King there is none of that malignant significance with which it is the custom for Hamlets to discount the coming victory. His 'no offence i' the world' is said drily, and that is all. His watching of the King is not conspicuous. He does not crawl prematurely towards him, or seize his robe. Even up to the crisis, though his excitement rises, his spirits bear him almost sportively through. But when once the King and Queen start from their chairs, Hamlet springs from the ground, darts with a shrill scream to the seats from which they vanished like ghosts, flings himself—a happy thought—into the chair which the King has vacated, his body swaying the while from side to side in irrepressible excitement, and recites there—though the roar of applause into which the audience is surprised renders it barely audible—the well-known stanza, 'Why, let the stricken deer go weep'. A still greater, because wild and bizarre, effect follows as Hamlet leaves the chair, and in a sort of jaunty nonsense rhythm chants the seldom-used lines,

For thou dost know, O Damon dear,
This realm dismantled was
Of Jove himself; and now reigns here
A very, very—peacock.

At the last word, said suddenly after a pause, he looks at Ophelia's fan, which he has kept till now, and throws it away, as if it had suggested a word and was done with. There is infinite significance in the apparent inconsequence of this last boyish burst, and it is very suggestive of the force and truth of Irving's conception, that the audience receive it with as much enthusiasm as if it were a perfectly logical and intelligible climax. The doggerel has only the faintest if any connection with the event, but it is evidently introduced by Shakespeare, as another example of Hamlet's constitutional exuberance, and upon this Irving has worked. So vivid a rendering of the play-scene lives not in our recollection. . . .

"We pass to the scene between Hamlet and his mother. The celebrated opening of this—the murder of Polonius—is not amongst Irving's strongest episodes. For some reason not easy to assign, he does not give the usual force to the question, 'Is it the King?' in which Charles Kean was, and

Sullivan is, great. The idea that Hamlet is startled into the most vehement excitement by the thought that he has done upon hazard the deed for which he has been trying to nerve and prepare himself, does not appear to have been so overpoweringly present to the new Hamlet as to his predecessors. All the rest of the scene is very fine, Hamlet's beseeching of his mother—to whom, be it remembered, he has come in mercy, not in judgment—is affecting beyond measure. His dispensing with the miniatures, in contrasting the two brothers, raises to a greater height of poetry language which has hitherto been lowered by these said pictures towards prose. And, above everything else, poignant and impressive is the earnestness with which Hamlet kneels and casts his head upon his mother's lap, at the adjuration to her not to escape the reproaches of her conscience by attributing to him madness. Here, with a mother to save from sin and destruction, there is nothing left of the son's antic disposition; but the deep, the tearful, susceptibility, which lies so near the base of his character, remains. Understood in the full significance of the relations between Hamlet and Gertrude, which Irving helps us to perceive by throwing aside all the accustomed stilted magnificence of the 'leading tragedian,' the spectacle is most memorable. A son kneeling where he said his first prayers, to implore the mother who taught him to lisp them to forsake her sin, is an incident worthy of the greatest poet, and only to be fitly enacted by the greatest of tragic actors. . . . Irving's performance of the churchyard scene has fitness, vigour, and genuine poetry, but no novelty—nothing noticeable, indeed, except subtle indications of the restraint which is placed on Hamlet when he is not alone by a quick sense of the ridiculous. But when we pass from this to the last scene, the whole spirit of the play is made new by his originality. Instead of producing the impression of a duly arranged shambles, usually conveyed by the moodiness and solemnity of all concerned in the fencing bout except Osric, the scene, as here played, gives one the feeling of a real trial of skill. For a wager Hamlet has for the nonce cast his nighted colour off, and is ready for sport. It is breathing-time of day with him, and he has no *arrière pensée*. He is sorry, heartily, for having injured Laertes, and makes amends like a true gentleman. He fences like one also, with delightful ease and brilliancy. Between the hits he talks merrily and self-complacently with his backers. All his troubles have not extinguished in him his liking for ribands in the cap of his youth. Probably he has begun to see that in great undertakings chance or Providence has more to say than we have. At any rate he is free for the time. Trouble will come soon enough. He is happier than he has seemed since he threw away Ophelia's fan. He means the King to win his wager, and will not heed the odd hits.

In fact, for anything that appears in this portion of the scene, the fencing match might be a mere lightsome parenthesis in the tragedy, not tending in any way to its catastrophe. But the mountebank's unction is to change all this. 'No cataplasm so rare, collected from all simples that have virtue under the moon,' can save an hour longer the long-forfeited life of Claudius. On a sudden, the fencers are incensed. They change foils in a brilliantly contrived pass. They mutually inflict fatal wounds. Then the truth gushes forth from the lips as the life-blood from the side of Laertes. Hamlet's misgiving, 'such as might trouble a woman,' has come true. There is a providence in the bating of a foil as in the fall of a sparrow. In Hamlet there is not half an hour's life. But a moment will suffice. The envenomed point might be dispensed with, so savage is the prince's onslaught on his adulterous uncle. Hamlet seizes the King by the collar of his royal robe as he might an intrusive scullion—runs him through as he holds him—flings him down backwards to the earth like carrion. The vengeance has come at last, from his hands and by his will, but not by his contrivance. There is no triumph in his victory. He has to die, and he yearns but to clear himself to those who look pale and trembling at this chance. He compels Horatio to live and do him justice. Then peacefully he expires, reaching his right hand upward to the heaven he hopes for, and then falling back in silence upon the earth—that 'sterile promontory' where the best year of his life has been made unutterably unhappy.

"So dies Hamlet—but lives immortal; henceforth more than ever a pathetic ideal of refined humanity, torn and wrecked upon cruel and coarse troubles; of young philosophy; of peering irresolution; of awed yet venturesome imagination; of wayward tricksiness; of religion faintly clouded with doubt, yet clear in tenderness of conscience and purity of sweet counsel; of love, domestic and sexual, embittered and shattered; of a heart riven by the sorrow most trying to it; of powers coping with problems horrible either to be mastered by, or to master; of thoughts teeming with imagery and conjecture, on which the world never tires of meditating; of a fate fitfully shunned, recklessly challenged, and at last encountered by mere chance medley; of many other things, also, which even Shakespeare can barely express, and about which lesser men can only wrangle.

"To present this matchless figure worthily and vividly to the men of his time has been the highest ambition of every great actor, and that ambition Henry Irving has abundantly attained. To prove it, we have dwelt not on his general philosophical sublimity or tragic grandeur in which he could but rank with noble predecessors, but on the features of Hamlet's being he has especially revealed and illuminated. In this character a thousand undying beauties and significances of art have been piously cherished from age to age. To Irving belongs the merit of snatching—with a hand feverish, perhaps, but sure—graces which were not, and can hardly become, in a stage sense, traditional. He has made Hamlet much more, and something more ethereal, than a type of feeble doubt, of tragic struggle, or even of fine philosophy. The immortality of his Hamlet is immortal youth, immortal enthusiasm, immortal tenderness, immortal nature."

CHAPTER XII.

1875-1876.

"Macbeth" revived—It brings in its train a series of severe criticisms —Castigation by the *Figaro*—Irving's conception of the part—His impersonation endorsed by the *Times*—Praise from other quarters—A "scurrilous libel"—Letter to "A Fashionable Tragedian"—The defendants summoned—They apologise in open court—Irving accepts their apology—At his request, the case is not sent for trial—"Macbeth" played for eighty nights—Literary effect of the revival.

THE popularity of "Hamlet" led to the decline of burlesque and the revival, as already noted in reference to the hundredth night of Shakespeare's tragedy, of the poetic drama. It also encouraged Irving to make his second venture in the Shakespearean field. This was a great opportunity for the carping critics and detractors in general. For was not Macbeth a bold and brawny warrior sent to his doom by the infernal promptings of the witches and the incessant urging of his terrible wife? Here was a straightforward character indeed, and one which could only be played by a man of muscle. Brains were not wanted here, but the physique of a bull and the roaring of a lion. So that the production of "Macbeth" on 18th September, 1875, was an opportunity not to be neglected. This was the beginning of some so-called "criticism" which was a disgrace to English newspapers and to the writers of the abuse. Irving had to endure, for some years, volleys of scandalous slanders which, if attempted nowadays, would be silenced in a month. If any actor of to-day were written about in the scurrilous tone which was thought fit to be applied to Henry Irving in 1875, 1876, and 1877—indeed until he became his own manager and was able to fight his own battles vigorously—the authors of the libels would have time to repent of their iniquities while languishing in gaol. In the eyes of some people, success is a crime, and, in Irving's case, the climax came when, having played Hamlet for two hundred nights, he ventured to give his own view of the character of Macbeth. Some critics condemned his performance as effeminate—which Irving never was, at any time, or in any part—while his terror was entirely opposed to Macbeth's reputation for courage. This was not Macbeth at all, but a sort of mediæval Mathias. "In Mr. Irving's conception there is intention, but it is wrong, and there are individual merits which will not compound for systematic error." This

MACBETH.

Revived at the Lyceum, 18th September, 1875.

Duncan	Mr. Huntley.
Malcolm	Mr. Brooke.
Donalbain	Miss Clair.
Macbeth	Mr. Henry Irving.
Banquo	Mr. Forrester.
Macduff	Mr. Swinbourne.
Lennox	Mr. Stuart.
Ross	Mr. G. Neville.
Menteith	Mr. Mordaunt.
Caithness	Mr. Seymour.
Fleance	Miss W. Brown.
Siward	Mr. Henry.
Young Siward	Mr. Sargent.
Seyton	Mr. Norman.
Doctor	Mr. Beaumont.
Porter	Mr. Collett.
An attendant	Mr. Branscombe.
Murderers	Messrs. Butler and Tapping.
Apparitions	Miss Brown. Mr. Harwood. Miss K. Brown.
Lady Macbeth	Miss Bateman (Mrs. Crowe).
Gentlewoman	Miss Marlborough.
Hecate	Miss Pauncefort.
Witches	Mr. Mead. Mr. Archer. Mrs. Huntley.

Act I., Scene 1. A Desert Place; Scene 2. A Heath; Scene 3. Palace at Forres; Scene 4. Macbeth's Castle; Scene 5. Exterior of Macbeth's Castle; Scene 6. Macbeth's Castle. Act II., Scene. Court of Macbeth's Castle. Act III., Scene 1. Palace at Forres; Scene 2. Park near the Palace; Scene 3. Palace at Forres. Act IV., Scene 1. The Pit of Acheron; Scene 2. England; A Lane; Scene 3. Dunsinane: Ante-room in the Castle. Act V., Scene 1. Country near Dunsinane; Scene 2. Dunsinane: Room in the Castle; Scene 3. Birnam Wood; Scene 4. Dunsinane Castle; Scene 5. Dunsinane Hill; Scene 6. Outer Court of the Castle.

was milk and honey compared to some of the references to Irving's Macbeth. The bare fact that he dared to be original acted like a match to the train of explosive wrath. The *Figaro*, which was noted for its trenchant criticisms, would not tolerate the Lyceum Macbeth in any degree. To do it justice, it expressed itself in decent language, although a trifle vehemently. "The latest representation of Macbeth which has, in many circles, been looked forward to with a hopefulness somewhat tempered by anxiety, must, in its leading features, be pronounced a disappointment; and a disappointment not only to those who believed that in the Lyceum management was to be found the chief promise of the long-delayed regeneration of the poetic drama. That the upward career of an intelligent and hardworking young actor should receive its first distinct check is no doubt unfortunate: for we have too many actors whose ambition is sufficient to lead them into any danger such as has proved fatal to Mr. Irving. But that a sincere and genuine effort, no matter what its motives, to sustain popular interest in the worldly representation of classic tragedy should, through the incompetence of its leading supporters, be covered with something very like ridicule, is little less than a calamity. The good which has been accomplished is undone, and the capacities of the theatre for future usefulness are seriously, though let us trust not irretrievably, injured; and those who had just begun to regard the temporary stage as a valuable agent for the illustration of our nobler national drama may be expected to look with sorrow and surprise upon a performance which, save in one particular, never helps its spectators to a better appreciation of the work illustrated. With a Lady Macbeth who is weak, and a Macbeth who to his weakness adds the most painful defects of style, how can we console ourselves with the excellence of the scenery and the appropriate acting of the witches? How can we avoid thinking that the picture is unworthy of the frame, and that any popularity which the melodramatic vulgarisation of the play in its principal character may have attained is to be regarded as an injury rather than as a boon? The Hamlet of

Mr. Irving was so thoroughly a student's Hamlet, and evinced so earnest a study of the part and its meaning, that the discussion provoked by his reading of the character of Macbeth was inevitable. Into this, however, we need not here enter at length, although it is sufficiently obvious that, if the actor's conception be, as we believe it, radically wrong, no amount of excellence in the execution could make his performance an artistic success."

Irving's conception of the character, be it said, was that Macbeth, though brave in the field, was the trembling prey of his imagination from the moment that he entered upon his terrible course of murder, and the collapse of his courage was completed when, with words of withering scorn, his wife snatched the dagger from his palsied hands. Irving represented Macbeth as a selfish assassin tinged by a touch of poetry. He imagined—and his views were based on careful study—that the idea of murder was not new to Macbeth, for it had been in his mind long before the opening of the play. The meeting with the weird sisters was due to the sympathy of evil with evil, and in order to urge him along the fatal path upon which, as they well know, he has already entered. He is unable to resist their temptation, but his cowardice and the remnants of his better self make him shrink from the actual perpetration of the crime until his wife screws his courage to the sticking point. His distress after the murder arises from abject terror, not remorse. There is no need to dwell further, at this point, on Irving's conception of the character, which never changed, since it enters into the history of the play when he subsequently revived it under his own management. Let us rather look at the reception of it in 1875. The *Figaro*, having concluded that Irving's view of Macbeth was not its own, castigated the player somewhat soundly: "Let it, however, be granted that the actor has, if not sufficient, at any rate plausible, grounds for the view which he has taken of the motive of the part: let it be admitted that great interest might attach to this possible phase of Macbeth's character: let it be recollected, too, that for the illustration of this unmanly Macbeth, Mr Irving's powers, as hitherto indicated, are far better suited than for the representation of a more robust hero. Let us grant all this, and then ask how far the artist has done justice to his own conception?—thus trying his performance by a test lower than that which might legitimately be applied. On doing so, we are compelled to pronounce the manner even less satisfactory than the substance.

"The mouthing mannerism, which was happily suppressed in all the important points of the actor's Hamlet, proves itself as inappropriate to dignified poetic tragedy as it was effective in morbid melodrama. It is as though an attempt were made to indicate the deepest feelings of the human heart by spasmodic hysteria—hysteria, moreover, sustained far beyond the powers of its subject. In the famous speech, 'If it were done,' etc., the actor, leaning meditatively against a pillar in the room, and showing his special power of natural soliloquy, as well by his attitude as by his tones, gives a pleasant touch of pathos to the lines expressive of his compunction:—

He's here in double trust;
First as I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then as his host,
Who should against his murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself.

But the kindly feeling is utterly out of keeping with the mean-spirited hound to whom, in the other scenes, we are introduced. In the dagger speech, however, there is not a good point, unless it be in the averted posture of the hands which dread to clutch the handle hovering before them. By repeating the needless whisper, adopted by Miss Bateman in the preceding scene, Mr. Irving produces a most irritating effect upon the ear, which is no by means lessened when the whispers are regularly alternated, line by line, with the ordinary pitch of voice. The beauty of the blank verse dialogue is of course utterly destroyed when it is jerked about as though for a feat of ventriloquy; and a valuable occasional aid to impressiveness of elocution is frittered away. Worse, however, remains behind: if the soliloquy in its struggle after unworthy effect is poor, what shall be said of the ranting, screaming exit, after the murder? That Mr. Irving's vocal power would fail him was, no doubt, to be expected; as his voice invariably plays him false when it is raised in passion. But why the screeching and staggering at all? Could not a great tragedian indicate to us any horror other than that of the nervous school-girl? Is it necessary, according to the text, that Macbeth should at this juncture never speak without gasping, and never gasp without almost falling to pieces?

"So again in the banquet scene, Macbeth's terror, whilst exaggerated, gains nothing by its exaggeration, and is utterly lacking in the element of solemnity, which so well-contrived a ghost should impart. Not until the last act, when, in spite of his previous efforts, the actor makes Macbeth a fine bold soldier, do we find anything in Mr. Irving's performance to really carry us out of ourselves into the poet's creation, and to realise for us a hero worthy of a tragedy higher in type than 'The Bells'. So good, indeed, is the combat with Macduff, that we may say of this Macbeth as Malcolm says of Cawdor:—

> Nothing in his life
> Became him like the leaving it."

Poor Miss Bateman came in for an equal, though not so lengthy, a censure, and the lesser members of the company fell under the same ban. "And without any flippant exaggeration," concluded the diatribe, "it may be said that the witches, and especially that of Mr. Mead, form the only really satisfactory representations of the evening." The young critics of 1875 were certainly outspoken.

On the other hand, there were critics—and experienced ones, too—who thoroughly endorsed Irving's reading of the part. "The popular Macbeth," wrote John Oxenford in the *Times*, "was not only a brave soldier, with all the physical qualities proper to his vocation, but likewise an apparently well-disposed man, who could have gone on safely to the end of his days if he had not unluckily met three evil old women on a heath, who put wicked thoughts into his head, and had he not, moreover, been cursed with an unscrupulous wife, who did her best, or rather her worst, to mature those thoughts into action. The evil agencies by which Macbeth is influenced are universally recognised; not so the extreme facility with which he yields to them. In the very first scene, when he has not been on the stage two minutes, no sooner has he been greeted by the witches as Glamis, Cawdor, and 'King hereafter,' than his manner suggests to Banquo, in whom the witches cause no terror whatever, the question:—

> Good sir, why do you start and seem to fear
> Things that do sound so fair?

The information a few minutes afterwards that the first prediction has been fulfilled leads immediately to a self-confession of murderous devices, conveyed in a speech too familiar to need citation. There is no nobility of nature about Macbeth; he is totally impotent to resist the very earliest allurements to crime, and is utterly without the fortitude to endure the consequences. After she has read his letter, and before she has seen him, his lady speaks of him as one who would not play false and yet would wrongly win." This, by the way, was the last criticism which Mr. Oxenford was destined to write.

As to the Macbeth of the hour, it was generally admitted by critics who objected to his conception of the part, that its interpretation was carried out consistently, and with great power. The murder scene was terrifically impressive; and Irving's acting at the close—his desperate resolution, his consciousness of more than human destiny, and his defiance of that destiny when it is turned against him, formed, said the *Pall Mall Gazette*, "a picture such as is not imagined without genius nor made visible without art". The *Illustrated London News* treated the subject with conspicuous fairness and dignity. It published a thoughtful essay on the subject in its Christmas number. "It was to be expected," it began, "that on Mr. Irving assuming the character of Macbeth he would be liable to more severe criticism than he had sustained on the performance of Hamlet. It is harder to secure the second step in progress than the first. Indulgence is granted to the first, mainly because it is the first, and if, in despite of some shortcomings, a certain degree of merit is recognisable, it is probable that, in general esteem, a success will be registered. In making the second attempt the first will have an antagonistic operation. The actor may have been equal to Hamlet; but is he therefore equal to Macbeth? The intellectual elements so cunningly mixed up in him may have exactly fitted him for the Prince of Denmark, but may be exactly the reverse in regard to the Thane of Cawdor. In fact, the contrast of the two characters is greater than their comparison. On the Continental stage, indeed, the same actor who had identified himself with Hamlet or Romeo, would scarcely be regarded as suited to Macbeth, Lear, or Othello. These parts represent different lines of art, and presuppose different powers to the artist. They stand in the relation, to begin with, of young and old; and the same person runs a risk of looking too young for the old part, or too old for the young one, too heavy for the one and too light for the other. The audience, on the first night, compared Mr. Irving's Macbeth with Mr. Irving's Hamlet; and it naturally happened that there were several who preferred the latter. Those who were willing to grant a fair trial to the former were at the same time cautious in pronouncing on the new attempt. They reserved their opinion until they had witnessed the performance a second time." The article then entered into a minute study of the character and it was in absolute agreement with Irving's conception, namely, that Macbeth's crime was contemplated long before he had met the witches—Shakespeare treats them as the exponents of Macbeth's state of mind, not as the prompters of his guilt. "Mr. Irving," the article continued, "is perfectly right in taking a philosophical view of the witch element in the drama, and portraying Macbeth, in the latter phases of the action, as completely independent of it, and resuming that comparative nobility and valour with which he is accredited in the earlier scenes. Upon the whole, therefore, we conclude that Mr. Irving, in his Macbeth delineation, has shown considerable genius and great judgment."

Allusion has been made to the scurrilous attacks upon Henry Irving which were prevalent at this time. As a rule, they were beneath the notice of the actor. Irving's staunch friend and manager, Bateman, was no longer in the land of the living, and Mrs. Bateman could not enter into the field of controversy. But one article was so bad that Irving was advised that he was bound, in self-defence, to take action in the matter. Had it stood alone it might have been passed over, but it was a continuation—although not written by the same pen—of a series of attacks in the same journal. On Christmas Eve, 1875, Mr. George Lewis, jr.—now Sir George Lewis—appeared at the Guildhall Police Court and handed to the magistrate, Sir Robert Carden, a copy of the paper containing the alleged libel. Mr. Lewis said that Mr. Irving had played parts in "The Bells," "Charles the First," "Eugene Aram," "Richelieu," "Philip," "Hamlet," and "Macbeth," and it had been announced that he was to play Othello, so that there could be no doubt as to whom the article was intended for. There was no question, he said, that it was a deliberate attempt to injure Mr. Irving; and, if the expressed intention of the writer was carried out, there was no doubt that it would do Mr. Irving a great injury. He (Mr. Lewis) therefore asked for a summons against the printer and publisher of *Fun* for libel, and that it should be made returnable immediately, so that the attacks might be put a stop to. Sir Robert Carden said that, having read the article, he could not imagine any other than a malicious motive in it, and he had no hesitation in granting the summons, as it was a "scurrilous libel". The summons was then issued, and, on the following Tuesday, the printer of the paper appeared in answer to it. The article in question was addressed and was as follows :—

"Sir,—I read with regret that it is your intention—as soon as the present failure at your house can be with dignity withdrawn—to startle Shakespearean scholars and the public with your conception of the character of Othello. In the name of that humanity to which, in spite of your transcendent abilities, you cannot avoid belonging, I beseech you, for the sake of order and morality, to abandon the idea. For some years past you have been the prime mover in a series of dramas which, carried by you to the utmost point of realistic ghastliness, have undermined the constitution of society, and familiarised the masses with the most loathsome details of crime and bloodshed. With the hireling portion of the Press at your command, you have induced the vulgar and unthinking to consider you a model of histrionic ability and the pioneer of an intellectual and cultured school of dramatic art. Having thus focussed the attention of the mob, you have not hesitated nightly to debauch its intelligence, to steep it in an atmosphere of diabolical lust and crude carnage, to cast around the foulest outrages the glamour of a false sentimentality. You have idealised blank-verse butchery until murder and assassination have come to be considered the natural environments of the noble and the heroic. Already the deadly weeds whose seeds you have so persistently scattered are spreading in rank luxuriance over the whole surface of society. Men revel in the details of the lowest forms of human violence; women crowd the public courts to gloat over the filthy details of murder and license; children in their nurses' arms babble the names of miscreants who have in sober earnest performed the deeds which you so successfully mimic for a weekly consideration. I maintain that for the disgusting bloodthirstiness and callous immorality of the present day you are in a great measure responsible. You have pandered to the lowest passions of our nature by clothing in an attractive garb the vilest actions of which we are capable. As a burgomaster, a schoolmaster, a king, a brother, a prince, and a chieftain, all of murderous proclivities, you have deluged the modern stage with the sanguine fluid, and strewn it with corpses. That a succession of such lessons could be harmlessly witnessed by mixed audiences it is absurd to contend. Let any thinking man look around him, and the fruits of this so-called elevation of the drama will be painfully apparent in a myriad incidents of our daily life. Elevate the drama, forsooth! You have canonised the cut-throat, you have anointed the assassin. Be content with the ghastly train of butchers you have foisted upon public attention and let your next venture, at least, be innocent of slaughter. If your performance of Othello be trumpeted to the four winds of Heaven by the gang of time-serving reporters in your employ, you will increase the epidemic of wife-murder one hundredfold, and degrade the national drama a further degree towards the level of the 'Penny Dreadful'.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,—A Disinterested Observer."

Ultimately, the printer was dismissed from the case, and the responsible parties—the editor of the paper and the writer of the article—admitted their offence. Had not the defendants apologised in open court, the magistrate would have sent the case for trial. In accepting the apology, Mr. Lewis, on behalf of the actor, said: "Mr. Irving having heard from the lips of each of the defendants their expression of extreme regret at the conduct of which they have been guilty, has instructed me now not to ask you to send this case for trial. Mr. Irving having performed his duty to society, and having done what he thinks was necessary for the protection of the interests of his profession, accepts the apologies. I have now to ask you, on behalf of the defendants, that they may be discharged. . . . This article was in no way honest, and it was in no way an attempt at criticism. Whatever may have been the object of the two defendants, it was a publication which it was perfectly impossible for Mr. Irving, having regard for his own self-esteem and his duty to society, to allow to pass unnoticed." In regard to the two defendants, it is only necessary to say that one has been dead for a number of years, and the other—who was only twenty-eight years of age when he wrote the article in question—has since risen to eminence, and has often expressed his regret for the rash act of his younger days. Irving forgave him at the time, and there the matter ended.

It was in this case that one of those extraordinary displays of ignorance—or affectation—for which the judicial bench is notorious, took place. Mr. Toole, in the course of his evidence, said: "If it is suggested to Mr. Irving not to play in tragedy, it is most impertinent, and in the worst taste," whereupon the magistrate remarked: "Perhaps it is quite out of Mr. Toole's line. No one ever shed a tear who saw Mr. Toole," to which remarkable statement the astonished actor could only ejaculate, "I am sorry to hear you say that". For his Michael Garner in "Dearer Than Life" had drawn tears from thousands of spectators, and his "Caleb Plummer" had been noted for its pathos for over thirteen years.

"Macbeth," notwithstanding the criticisms of the cavillers, was played for eighty nights. Apart from the merits of

Irving's impersonation—and these were freely recognised in after years—the revival had a literary interest which has, generally speaking, been overlooked in previous biographies. Never, since the Restoration, had the tragedy been presented with more regard to the intention of the author, and, on no other occasion, had—to put the case on very modest ground—the play been given with more exact study or cultivated taste. Tradition went by the board, and Irving thought for himself. This welcome change was greeted warmly by one of the least enthusiastic of Irving's critics—Joseph Knight—who wrote in the *Athenæum:* "In place of the curious mosaic to which the stage is used, we have the words of Shakespeare, the music which Lock or some one else wrote for Davenant's verses is thrust into its proper place, in the entr' actes; and readings which are authoritative are given in place of those which are popular or effective. A vindication of this method of treatment, the only treatment defensible in the case of Shakespeare, could scarcely be desired more complete than was in the present instance afforded. Not only was no sense of loss begotten by the absence of the familiar appendages, but the scenes, now first divested of extraneous matter, produced, for the first time, their full effect. From the moment when, in the opening scene, the witches were revealed by flashes of lightning to that wherein they executed, in their final appearance, that 'antic round' to cheer the spirits of Macbeth, which all editions concur in giving, the scenes remained impressive. The scenery illustrated the action without overpowering it, and the costumes, from the highest to the lowest, were at once artistic and full of character." Some slight innovations in the text were also commended by Mr. Knight, a critic, by the way, who never tired, at this period, of pointing out those unfortunate mannerisms—partly inherent, partly the result of excess of nervousness—which Irving controlled with such mastery in his later years that it seemed impossible that they could have been so pronounced as, it is certain, they were. To have triumphed over them was but a proof—and a remarkable one—of the actor's greatness. One specimen of Mr. Knight's remarks on this head will suffice: "Mr. Irving must learn," he wrote, in connection with the performance of Macbeth, "that his mannerisms have developed into evils so formidable they will, if not checked, end by impeding his career. His slow pronunciation and his indescribable elongation of syllables bring the whole, occasionally, near burlesque. Mr. Irving has youth, intelligence, ambition, zeal, and resolution. These things are sacrificed to vices of style, which have strengthened with the actor's success, and, like all weeds of ill growth, have obtained excessive development. It is impossible to preserve the music of Shakespeare if words of one syllable are to be stretched out to the length of five or six. Mr. Irving's future depends greatly on his mastery of these defects." Such a pronouncement, coming with the dignity of the *Athenæum*, and not prompted by any desire to wound, must have been an encouragement to the small fry of the press to air their spite of the man who had succeeded in drawing, at the age of thirty-seven, all ranks of playgoers for two hundred nights to Hamlet.

CHAPTER XIII.

1876-1877.

"Othello" revived — Salvini's rendering of the character—Severe criticism on Irving's impersonation—Even his costume offends—Gladstone introduces himself to Irving—"Queen Mary" produced—A "family play" —Irving's success stimulates theatrical enterprise—He reads a paper on Amusements at Shoreditch—A busy month—Helen Faucit acts Iolanthe for Irving's benefit—A triumphal tour—Honours in Dublin—Reappears in London as Macbeth—"Richard III." revived—His rooms in Grafton-street described.

"THUS bad begins," may be said, in the words of the Prince of Denmark, of some of the newspaper writers of the days before Irving became his own manager, but "worse remains behind". They had been obliged to tolerate Hamlet, for public opinion was too strong for them on this point, and they had steeped their pens in vitriol over Macbeth. But they were now to get their greatest chance of all. "Macbeth" was followed by a brief revival of "Hamlet," pending a production of—"Othello"! This spirit of bravado was too much for anybody to endure. Had not the great Italian actor, Tommaso Salvini—he of enormous physique, of organ-like voice—been seen as the Moor, the true Moor, the veritable Moor, the only Moor that ever was, could, or should be? Had he not, in April, 1875, come to London and conquered, as Othello, and should this stripling actor, who might possibly have brains, but certainly did not possess a bulky frame, or a round, mellow voice which could coo as sweetly as a sucking-dove or anon roar like thunder, be allowed to masquerade as Othello? What right had he, an Englishman, to attempt a feat in which the Italian had succeeded? Not to speak of Salvini, there was the shade of Gustavus Vaughan Brooke hovering round and forbidding such a profanation of the sacred shrine. But even Irving's worst enemies could never deny that he had courage—although they called this admirable quality by another name. Accordingly, having made his mind up to attempt the awful task of doing what he had a perfect right to do, he appeared as Othello on Monday, 14th February, 1876. Leaving, until five years later, a brief description of Irving's impersonation—his conception of Othello did not vary between 1876 and 1881, when he acted it again—it may be instructive to look at some onslaughts which were the consequence of an innocent attempt of a popular player to continue his essays—so auspiciously begun with Hamlet—in Shakespeare. It may be remarked, in passing, that Salvini had undoubtedly made a great impression as Othello in the previous April. An impartial observer, the critic of the *Athenæum*, who, as already pointed out, was not chary in censuring Henry Irving, said that Salvini's Othello was "splendid alike in its qualities and its defects, in virtues which raise it to something like supremacy in tragic art, and in defects powerful enough to mar its beauty, and leave the

OTHELLO.

Revived at the Lyceum, 14th February, 1876.

Othello	Mr. Henry Irving.
Duke	Mr. Collett.
Bbabantio	Mr. Mead.
Roderigo	Mr. Carton.
Gratiano	Mr. Huntley.
Lodovico	Mr. Archer.
Cassio	Mr. Brooke.
Iago	Mr. Forrester.
Montano	Mr. Beaumont.
Antonio	Mr. Sargent.
Julio	Mr. Tapping.
Marco	Mr. Harwood.
Paulo	Mr. Butler.
Desdemona	Miss Isabel Bateman.
Emilia	Miss Bateman (Mrs. Crowe).

Act I., Scene 1. A Street in Venice; Scene 2. Another Street in Venice; Scene 3. A Council Chamber. Act II., Scene 1. The Harbour at Cyprus; Scene 2. A Street in Cyprus; Scene 3. The Court of Guard. Act III., Scene. Othello's House. Act IV., Scene 1. Othello's House; Scene 2. A Street in Cyprus. Scene 3. Exterior of Iago's House. Act V., Scene. A Bedchamber.

prevalent impression on the mind one not far from disappointment.

"Much as English actors may learn from the distinguished stranger who now comes among us, it will be an evil day for art when young actors begin to train themselves in the school of which he is the most illustrious exponent." Yet, because he was not a second Salvini, Irving was condemned out of hand for his early impersonation of Othello. The same impartial critic observed the gradual conquest of the intellectual nature, and its disappearance before the rising passion and fury, which were the keynotes of Salvini's performance. In the earlier part of the play, the merits of the impersonation overshadowed its many defects. But in the concluding scenes of the last act, the conquest of the civilised being by the barbarian, was carried out at the sacrifice of Shakespeare's intentions and that of art. The murder scene, as he handled it, was one of the most repulsive things of the kind ever witnessed on the stage. "He seizes Desdemona by the hair of the head, and, dragging her on to the bed, strangles her with a ferocity which seems to delight in its office. The murder committed, Othello walks agitatedly backwards and forwards, not answering the cry of Emilia. When she tells him of the death of Roderigo by the hand of Cassio he starts, then relapses into sullen fury of discontent. He remains motionless for a while with eye glazing, as he learns how mightily he has been abused, then staggers forward with open mouth and with a countenance charged with tragic passion. The following words are delivered in a wild abandonment of grief, that in the end becomes inarticulate in utterance, and with an accompaniment of beating of his head with his hands which, according to English canons of art, is excessive. Suddenly the thought of the tempter comes to him. Crouching like a wild beast, he prepares for a spring. A sword is in the girdle of one of the attendants. Upon this he seizes, and passes it with one thrust through the traitor's body. Staggering then to a seat, he commences, sitting and weeping, the final speech. Nearing the end, he rises, and at the supreme moment cuts his throat with a short scimitar, hacking and hewing with savage energy, and imitating the noise that escaping blood and air may make together when the windpipe is severed. Nothing in art so terribly realistic as this death-scene has been attempted. It is directly opposed to Shakespeare, who makes Othello say:—

> I took by the throat the circumcisèd dog,
> And smote him—thus.

A man does not take by the neck one whose throat he is going to cut, since he would cut his own fingers in so doing. He seizes one, on the contrary, into whose heart he is about to plunge a dagger. The word 'smote' in Shakespeare is indeed sufficiently clear to leave no room for doubt or misconception. The effect on the audience is repellent to the last degree. This kind of death-scene needs only such slight and easily provided additions as the rupture of a bladder of blood, which the actor might place within reach, the exhibition of a bleeding throat, and a stream of blood serpenting upon the floor, to reach the limits of attainable realism. Tendencies in the direction of this kind of so-called art were seen in Signora Ristori, and marred her marvellously artistic impersonations. In the present case, the effect is singularly detrimental to the artistic value of the performance."

The murder scene, as acted by Salvini, marred an otherwise magnificent performance. But the Italian actor, nevertheless, was treated with extreme courtesy by the press. On the other hand, Irving was treated more like a man who had committed a crime, than an actor who had done his best, for venturing upon Othello. This was mild in comparison with some of the invectives: "Brain, industry, and nervous energy may do much, but voice, concentrated strength, and grace do much more for the highest form of tragedy. At certain important moments, Mr. Irving, well knowing what he wishes to do, is still not master of himself, and somehow the fascination of such plays as 'The Bells' has made him over-enamoured with his own style. This style, or mannerism, is increased rather than corrected, and we observe fresh instances of that habit of so losing the character in the dream of an idea that it becomes extremely difficult for the audience to follow the actor. It ought not to be necessary to know the text in order to keep up with the artist, but rather to be so attracted by the interpretation as to hurry back to the book. If Mr. Irving could always correctly express what he means, he would be one of the greatest of English actors. These failings are only brought prominently to notice when such characters as the Moor of Venice are attempted. The physical necessities required for a Hamlet or an Othello are not to be compared." These observations, if not very profound, were made in a kindly manner. In other quarters, he was condemned in advance: "After the impression made upon us by the wonderful impersonation of Signor Salvini in the same rôle, we confess that we did not give way to expectations of a satisfactory performance. Striking it was sure to be, and, in some respects, highly artistic. But we could not, by any process of imagination, fancy Henry Irving as a fit exponent of the ardent and passionate Moorish general." A critic who started out with such pre-conceived notions could not be expected to find much pleasure in the performance. It is, therefore, not surprising to be told that "the result was not satisfactory".

The new Othello gave great offence at the outset by his costume: "Mr. Irving appeared at first clothed in a very picturesque scarlet mantle, with a hood; and from the beginning he looked entirely different from what any student of Shakespeare can imagine Othello to have been. His performance throughout evidenced such an amount of care, of study, and of elaboration that it becomes a matter of difficulty to condemn his entire performance as decisively as it deserves to be condemned. Mr. Irving had evidently laboured to avoid any of the features of Salvini's performances. He has carried his eccentricity of both voice and gesture to the verge of the grotesque. In the scene where he interrupts the fighting between Cassio and Montano with 'Put up your bright swords or the dew will rust them,' Mr. Irving made an inarticulate exclamation which caused an audible laugh in the gallery. In the temptation scene, 'Villain, be sure thou prove,' etc., his simulation of rage was impotent; and when he seized Iago by the throat there was no dignity in his wrath, and one felt surprised at a man of Iago's manliness submitting to such rough usage. His elocution, though in one or two passages extremely good, seemed to be marred by the violence of his efforts to express passion. It is to be regretted that an actor of Mr. Irving's genius should select parts which by nature he is unfitted to play, when he might easily find others suited to his characteristics, and which, with half the study, would prove more satisfactory." As a specimen of wholesale condemnation, the following may be cited: "It would be serving no good purpose, either in the interest of dramatic art or in consideration of the future of a talented artist, to gloss over or discover excuses for the new Othello at the Lyceum. There are times, no doubt, when all are anxious and willing to deal gently with ambitious efforts, and to err on the side of appreciation wherever and whenever it is clearly shown that ambition and modesty are combined. Encouragement, on the whole, is far more valuable as an incentive than wholesale depreciation; and many a one of a sanguine and energetic temperament has been saved to the stage and to the ennobling of art by kindly criticism, whereas he might have been disheartened and prostrated by condemnation, which is, after all, the easiest form of criticism. But in the case of Mr. Henry Irving no such scruples are needed. He has made his way by his own intellect, and has received generous encouragement at the hands of the public. He has been praised and congratulated with impulsive liberality. As a young man, and, comparatively speaking, an untried artist, he has been lifted over the heads of his seniors in the profession who have borne the labour and heat of the day, and probably there is no actor of the present time who can so well afford to be told, clearly and emphatically, when he has made a mistake. We do not beat about the bush, or ask people to read between the lines. We have no reason to go out of our way to smooth over our disappointment or ask for mercy, and under these circumstances we do not hesitate to declare our disapproval of the Othello of Mr. Henry Irving. To approve such a performance would be tacitly to condemn the great English representatives of the character. To speak favourably of such acting would be to express ignorance of a mass of past criticism. To countenance the admission of fatal mannerisms and false elocution would be to help sow the seeds of a system which might be fatal to the stage. If it be true that the art of the actor is to hold the mirror up to nature then on that one ground should this new Othello be condemned; for a representation of the part more antagonistic to the first principles of natural acting it would be difficult to conceive. For nature we get exaggeration; for elocution, scolding; for affection, melancholy; and for deportment, trick." Some seven hundred words of vituperation succeeded, and the abuse was half-apologised for by this excuse: "Overmuch tragedy in long potent doses and a distinct want of physical power may in a measure account for this disappointment. But we do not see that anything can alter it. The mannerisms which have been overlooked for so many years have now asserted themselves so prominently that they seriously interfere with the effect of that admirable study which Mr. Irving always devotes to his work. It is vexing, no doubt, that the change should have come so soon. His Hamlet was one of those charming performances to which the playgoer looks back with infinite pleasure, and we can only express our regret that any persuasion should have induced the actor to follow up such a success with characters for which he showed so few physical qualifications." And so the weary tale went on. There were some writers who took Irving's view of Othello, and who understood his interpretation. But the performance met with general censure, and there is no doubt that, even as an expression of Irving's own idea of the character, it was not equal to his interpretation of 1881. Nor did he himself think Othello one of his most successful efforts, for, after the latter date, he did not repeat it.

Irving had, by now, formed some valuable friendships with people who were eminent in other worlds than his own. When walking down Bond Street one day, he was touched on the shoulder by Mr. Gladstone, "who introduced himself with characteristic frankness," an incident which gave rise to several caricatures. A night or two later, the eminent statesman visited the Lyceum and congratulated the actor very warmly. Another friendship was that with Alfred Tennyson, one outcome of which was the production of the first play of the Poet Laureate. This was "Queen Mary," a five-act drama which, on 18th April, succeeded "Othello". The piece, regarded as a work for dramatic representation, was a poor one, quite unfitted for the stage. The poet had done his own condensation and had done it so ruthlessly that no less than twenty-seven characters—more than half—were omitted from the stage version. The most stirring scenes,

QUEEN MARY.

First acted at the Lyceum, 18th April, 1876.

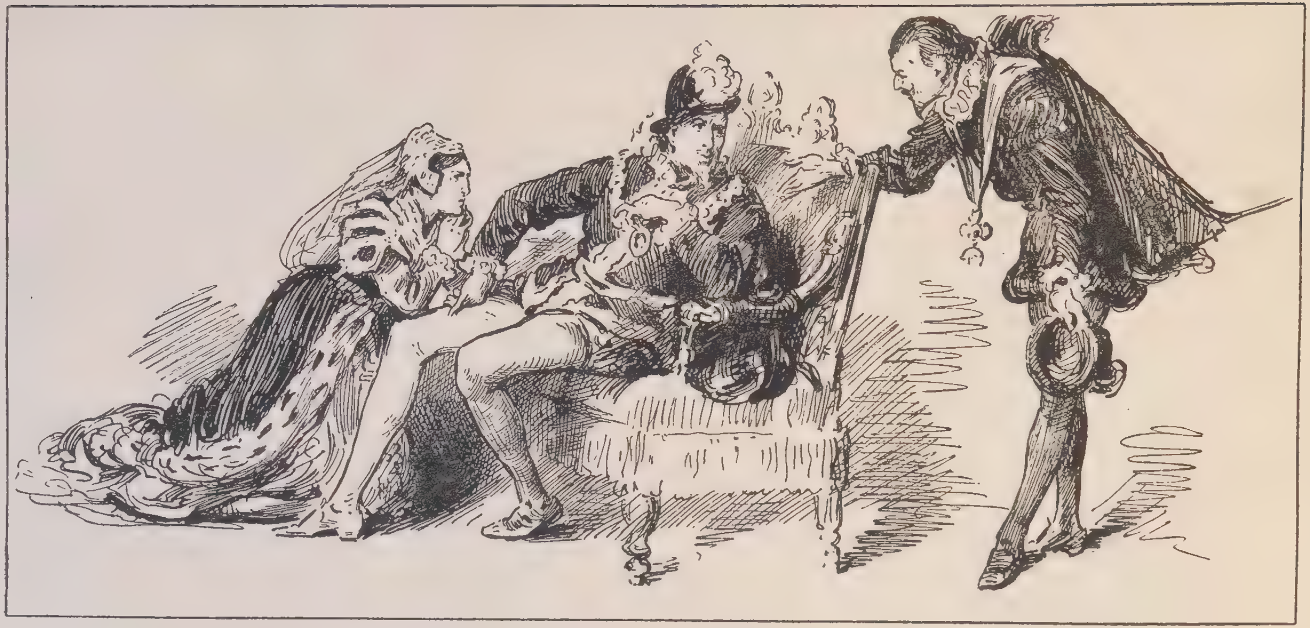
PHILIP OF SPAIN	MR. HENRY IRVING.
GARDINER	MR. SWINBOURNE.
SIMON RENARD	MR. BROOKE.
LE SIEUR DE NOAILLES	MR. WALTER BENTLEY.
EDWARD COURTENAY	MR. CARTON.
LORD WILLIAM HOWARD	MR. MEAD.
SIR THOMAS WHITE	MR. HUNTLEY.
COUNT DE FERIA	MR. BEAUMONT.
MASTER OF WOODSTOCK	MR. COLLETT.
LORD PETRE	MR. STUART.
MESSENGER	MR. SARGENT.
STEWARD TO PRINCESS ELIZABETH	MR. NORMAN.
ATTENDANT	MR. BRANSCOMBE.
MARY OF ENGLAND	MISS BATEMAN (MRS. CROWE).
PRINCESS ELIZABETH	MISS VIRGINIA FRANCIS.
LADY CLARENCE	MISS PAUNCEFORT.
LADY MAGDALEN DACRES	MISS CLAIRE.
JOAN	MRS. HUNTLEY.
TIB	MR. ARCHER.
MAID OF HONOUR	MISS HALL.
ALICE	MISS ISABEL BATEMAN.

ACT I., SCENE. An Apartment at Whitehall. ACT II., SCENE 1. The Guildhall; SCENE 2. The Gatehouse at Westminster. ACT III., SCENE 1. Apartment at Woodstock; SCENE 2. Whitehall. ACT IV., SCENE 1. Street in Smithfield; SCENE 2. Apartment at Whitehall. ACT V., SCENE 1. Mansion near London; SCENE 2. The Queen's Oratory.

oddly enough, were cut out, and the play was reduced to a monotonous story of Mary's unrequited love, Philip's disdain, and the hopes of the Princess Elizabeth. Cranmer, bishops and priests, and the crowd were left out in order, presumably, not to wound the religious susceptibilities of the audience. But a line, "I am English Queen, not Roman Emperor," which was retained, produced a mild ebullition of feeling. The demonstration in question aroused one paper to the "retort direct," for it hastened to point out, with a directness which did it credit, that "the political pulse of the nation can never be gauged by the cheers or hisses of the fools that form a due proportion of every theatrical audience". This was plain speaking. But no amount of political discussion could save a poor play, one, moreover, which did not contain a prominent part for the mainstay of the theatre. The elder Miss Bateman had the chief character, Queen Mary, and her performance of a dull part could not raise the piece to distinction. Her youngest sister, Miss Virginia Francis Bateman was the Elizabeth, and Miss Isabel Bateman had another rôle. In fact, it was a sort of family play. Irving did not come on the stage until the second scene of the third act and he disappeared with the fourth act, the final portion of the play being left to the representative of Queen Mary, whose sorrows were bewailed through the last act. Irving, in appearance, was a perfect Titian portrait, and, for once, there was no complaint of his "mannerisms". In look and speech, he was Philip absolutely. He represented the stiff Spaniard and cold, heartless grandee to the life. The part might have been easily exaggerated. But he kept it within proper limits. He was, undoubtedly, the poet's Philip, princely in exterior, sarcastic without reserve, cynically crafty, aching with supreme ennui in the presence of the woman who would give her life for a share of his love. Philip was not a great part, but it was completely presented. An independent critic advised "all who take an interest in English acting to go and see how efficiently, how superbly, with what just balance and due discretion, the Spaniard Prince is personated by Mr. Irving.

Gestures, tone, and 'station' are alike admirable, profoundly studied and shown forth."

"Queen Mary" was, at least, useful in giving a respite from strenuous work and in allaying the abuse of acrimonious critics. The action for libel which had preceded it had, no doubt, a wholesome effect in the latter direction. But the rise of the young actor had also an influence on the London theatres and the playgoing public in general. The Easter of 1876 witnessed unusual activity on the stage. Indeed, the number of plays then acted had not been approached within the recollection of the oldest playgoer. In addition to the piece by Tennyson, there was a new drama by Wilkie Collins — "Miss Gwilt," adapted from his novel, "Armadale"—at the now defunct Globe Theatre; a melodramatic comedy, "Wrinkles," by Henry J. Byron, at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, Tottenham Court Road; a comic melodrama, "Struck Oil," at the Adelphi; a three-act Palais Royal farce, "The Great Divorce Case," with Charles Wyndham in the principal part, at the Criterion; and a nautical transpontine drama at the Surrey. The St. James's and the Royalty were devoted to comic operas, the Charing Cross (afterwards Toole's, and subsequently destroyed for the enlargement of the hospital) had been opened "with varieties" by John Hollingshead, while a new spectacle had been produced at the Alhambra. There were also two distinguished foreign artists in London—the Italian tragedian, Ernesto Rossi, at Drury Lane, and a German tragedienne, Madame Janauschek, at the Haymarket. The Irving influence was already benefiting the other members of his profession. In connection with "Queen Mary," Robert Browning, who was present on the first night wrote the next day to "my dear Tennyson" assuring him, rather prematurely, of "the complete success" of the play. "Irving was very good indeed," he continued, "and the others did their best, not so badly. The love as well as admiration for the author was conspicuous, indeed, I don't know whether you ought to have been present to enjoy it, or were safer in absence from a smothering of



Miss Bateman as Queen Mary. Irving as Philip.

Philip: By St. James, I do protest,
Upon the faith and honour of a Spaniard,
I am vastly grieved to leave your Majesty.
Simon, is supper ready?
—Act iii., Sc. vi.

flowers and deafening 'tumult of acclaim'. But Hallam was there to report, and Mrs. Tennyson is with you to believe. All congratulations to you both." According to a less enthusiastic spectator, the play was received, at the first representation, with respectful attention and frequent tokens of enthusiasm. At the conclusion, Irving appeared before the curtain and announced that, unfortunately, the author had not been able to be present, but that, "with permission," he was about to telegraph him that the play had been "with the audience generally, a confirmed success". Irving, as Philip, wore light hair and—a beard.

Friday, the 31st of March, was a memorable date in the life of the subject of this biography. Henry Irving then delivered the first of his many addresses on the stage. His paper was entitled "Amusements," and it was read at the Conference in connection with the Church of England Temperance Society, in the Town Hall, Shoreditch. He denounced the evils of drinking among the lower orders, and urged that the theatre should be advocated as a resort where an entertainment could be enjoyed by the middle and lower classes alike. "Make the theatre respected by openly recognising its services," he pleaded. "Make it more respectable by teaching the working and lower middle classes to watch for good or even creditable plays, and to patronise them when presented. Let members of religious congregations know that there is no harm, but, rather, good in entering into ordinary amusements, as far as they are decorous. Use the pulpit, the press, and the platform to denounce, not the stage, but certain evils that find allowance on it. In England, attendance at a theatre—I know this well, for I was brought up in Cornwall—is too commonly regarded as a profession of irreligion. Break down this foolish and vicious idea, and one may hope that some inroads may be made on the dominions of the drink demon and some considerable acreages annexed to the dominions of religion and virtue."

June was an exceedingly busy month for the hardworking actor who had raised the Lyceum Theatre to such eminence.

On the afternoon of Thursday the 8th, "The School for Scandal" was acted at Drury Lane for the benefit of the popular comedian, J. B. Buckstone, who was associated for so long with the Haymarket Theatre. The performance, in fact, was a well-earned recognition of his connection with that house, as lessee and manager, for twenty-three years, and of his public services as an actor for close upon half a century. Irving played Joseph Surface a character which, it will be recalled, he acted at the St. James's Theatre in 1867. The cast of the Drury Lane performance embraced all the principal players of the day, and was as follows: Sir Peter Teazle, Samuel Phelps; Sir Oliver Surface, S. Emery; Joseph Surface, Henry Irving; Charles Surface, Charles Mathews; Sir Benjamin Backbite, J. B. Buckstone; Crabtree, John Ryder; Careless, C. F. Coghlan; Trip, Mr. S. B. Bancroft; Moses, David James; Snake, B. Webster; Rowley, Henry Howe; Sir Harry, Mr. Charles Santley; Musical guest, J. Parry; Sir Toby, F. Everill; Servant to J. Surface, Edward Righton; Servant to Sir P. Teazle, Mr. C. Sugden; Servant to Lady Sneerwell, Arthur Cecil; Lady Teazle, Adelaide Neilson; Mrs. Candour, Mrs. Stirling; Lady Sneerwell, Mrs. Alfred Mellon; Maria, Miss Lucy Buckstone; Lady Teazle's Maid, Miss E. Farren. Mrs. Keeley delivered an address, written by Henry J. Byron, to which Buckstone responded. The stage-manager was Edward Stirling. It is sad to think that of all that gallant crowd there are now only three survivors—Sir Squire Bancroft, Sir Charles Santley, and Mr. Charles Sugden.

On the following Monday, 12th June, "The Bells" and "The Belle's Stratagem" were revived at the Lyceum. As the former play had been acted so recently, it did not require much rehearsal, but Mrs. Cowley's comedy was new to the present company. Irving, of course, was the Doricourt and thereby recalled his previous performance of 1866. Miss Isabel Bateman was the Letitia Hardy. Her sister, Miss Virginia "Francis," was the Mrs. Racket, and the cast included the late Miss Lucy Buckstone—daughter of the Haymarket Buckstone—Mr. E. H. Brooke, and Mr. Walter Bentley. On the following Friday afternoon, Irving appeared at a charity performance. His position is somewhat curiously indicated by the following reference: "It has come to pass that wherever Mr. Henry Irving appears, or whatever he performs, there are two or three gathered together in his name. Therefore, it was a wise and politic thing of the promoters of the benefit performance in aid of the funds of 'The Samaritan Free Hospital for Women and Children' to seek the assistance of the popular tragedian. The performance took place in St. George's Hall, and Mr. Irving recited Hood's 'Dream of Eugene Aram' in his well-known style. As soon as he had finished, a number of his more immediate worshippers rose and left the house. So soon as the excitement consequent upon their exodus had subsided, the curtain rose upon the chief feature of the entertainment, namely, 'His Last Legs,' performed by amateurs." The unconscious humour of the last sentence is not bad.

THE BELLE'S STRATAGEM.

Revived at the Lyceum, 12th June, 1876.

Doricourt - - - -	Mr. Henry Irving.
Mr. Hardy - - - -	Mr. J. Archer.
Sir George Touchwood - -	Mr. Beaumont.
Flutter - - - - -	Mr. Brooke.
Saville - - - - -	Mr. Bentley.
Villers - - - - -	Mr. Carton.
Courtall - - - - -	Mr. Stuart.
Letitia Hardy - - - -	Miss Isabel Bateman.
Mrs. Racket - - - -	Miss Virginia Francis.
Lady Frances Touchwood -	Miss Lucy Buckstone.

Act I., Scene 1. Lincoln's Inn; Scene 2. An Apartment at Doricourt's; Scene 3. A Room in Hardy's House. Act II., Scene. Ballroom. Act III., Scene 1. Hardy's House; Scene 2. Doricourt's Bedchamber; Scene 3. Queen Square; Scene 4. A Room in Hardy's House.

On Friday, the 23rd, Irving took his benefit at the Lyceum, and played three parts—Count Tristan in Sir Theodore Martin's version of "King René's Daughter," Eugene Aram, and Doricourt. Additional interest was lent to the occasion by the circumstance that Miss Helen Faucit, who played Iolanthe to the Count Tristan of Henry Irving, then made her last appearance on the stage. The season, which was memorable for several reasons, closed on the following evening with "Hamlet".

The autumn of 1876 was an auspicious one for the actor. It brought him renewed triumphs and fresh honours, and it ushered in a year of great artistic and popular success. He had the satisfaction of attracting nearly eighteen thousand people in a city where he had endured many trials and done much hard work—Manchester. Crowded audiences, the enthusiasm of which was striking, also welcomed him in Birmingham, Liverpool, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Dundee, Glasgow, Belfast, and Dublin. The warmth of his reception in the latter city more than atoned for the unmerited wrath which had been heaped upon his innocent head sixteen years previously. On 9th December, the graduates and undergraduates of Trinity College presented him—the ceremony taking place in the historic dining-hall of the University of Dublin—with an address which read as follows: "Sir,—The engagement which you bring to a conclusion to-night at the Theatre Royal has given the liveliest pleasure to the graduates and undergraduates of Trinity College, Dublin. To the most careful students of Shakespeare you have, by your scholarly and original interpretation, revealed new depths of meaning in 'Hamlet,' and aroused in the minds of all a fresh interest in our highest poetry. As Charles the First, in the new drama of our countryman, Mr. Wills, you have set forth the dignity of fallen grandeur. You have depicted in 'The Bells,' with a terrible fidelity, the Nemesis that waits on crime. For the delight and instruction that we (in common with our fellow-citizens) have derived from all your impersonations, we tender you our sincere thanks. But it is something more than gratitude for personal pleasure or personal improvement that moves us to offer this public homage to your genius. Acting such as yours ennobles and elevates the stage, and serves to restore it to its true function as a potent instrument for intellectual and moral culture. Throughout your too brief engagement our stage has been a school of true art, a purifier of the passions, and a nurse of heroic sentiments; you have even succeeded in commending it to the favour of a portion of society, large and justly influential, who usually hold aloof from the theatre. It is not too much to say that with opportunities such as you have afforded us, Dublin audiences might again become what tradition reports them once to have been—a tribunal whose approval went far to make the fame of an artist hitherto unknown, and without whose sanction no reputation was considered to be absolutely assured." A few hours later, the Theatre Royal was packed from floor to ceiling, and "Hamlet" was played before an audience headed by the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland and the Duke of Connaught, and including five hundred students of Trinity College as well as the representative men of Dublin in other walks of life, many clergymen being conspicuous. All the University men, past and present, wore rosettes, and, when the actor whom they had come to honour made his first appearance, it seemed as though the applause would never cease. At the end of the tragedy, the enthusiasm knew no bounds, nor did it abate until the students had escorted the hero of the hour to his hotel.

On the following Monday, 16th December, Irving returned to the Lyceum and reappeared—in open defiance of all the carping critics—as Macbeth. His judgment in so doing was endorsed by the verdict of the public. For he was received —and it is well to take the recorded description of a very guarded critic—"with an enthusiasm which may best be described as passionate. A sight such as is now presented is quite unprecedented in stage history, and is worth taking into account by those who study the age in its various manifestations. We have here a man whom a large portion of the public, and by no means the least cultivated section, receives as a great actor. The manifestations are, moreover, such as we read of in the case of the greatest of his predecessors, and contain that mixture of admiration and personal regard which men like Kean or Kemble were able to inspire in their admirers. Yet criticism holds itself aloof, discontented and unsympathetic"—this was not the case in regard to "Hamlet," or in the provinces, nor was it true in a general sense—"and the actor's own profession, though it is, of course, sensible of merit, fails to partake the enthusiasm of the public." This observation about Irving's "brother" actors is very curious, as it shows their disposition towards him in 1876. But, for all that, he guided his own course then, as in after years, and, while "Macbeth" was being played, preparations were afoot for a fourth Shakespearean venture. This was "Richard III.," which was produced on 29th January, 1877, and thereby accomplishing, among other things, the overthrow of the travesty of the tragedy by Colley Cibber which had held the

RICHARD THE THIRD.

Revived at the Lyceum, 29th January, 1877.

King Edward IV. - - -	Mr. Beaumont.
Edward, Prince of Wales -	Miss Brown.
Richard, Duke of York - -	Miss Harwood.
George, Duke of Clarence -	Mr. Walter Bentley.
Richard, Duke of Gloucester	Mr. Henry Irving.
Henry, Earl of Richmond -	Mr. E. H. Brooke.
Cardinal Bourchier - -	Mr. Collett.
Duke of Buckingham - -	Mr. T. Swinbourne.
Duke of Norfolk - - -	Mr. Harwood.
Lord Rivers - - - -	Mr. Carton.
Lord Hastings - - - -	Mr. R. C. Lyons.
Lord Stanley - - - -	Mr. A. W. Pinero.
Lord Lovel - - - -	Mr. Serjeant.
Marquis of Dorset - - -	Mr. Seymour.
Lord Grey - - - -	Mr. Arthur Dillon.
Sir Richard Ratcliff - -	Mr. Louther.
Sir William Catesby - -	Mr. J. Archer.
Sir James Tyrrel - - -	Mr. A. Stuart.
Sir James Blunt - - -	Mr. Branscombe.
Sir Robert Brackenbury - -	Mr. H. Smyles.
Dr. Shaw - - - - -	Mr. Tapping.
Lord Mayor - - - -	Mr. Allen.
First Murderer - - -	Mr. T. Mead.
Second Murderer - - -	Mr. Huntley.
Queen Margaret - - -	Miss Bateman.
Queen Elizabeth - - -	Miss Pauncefort.
Duchess of York - - -	Mrs. Huntley.
Lady Anne - - - -	Miss Isabel Bateman.

Act I., Scene 1. A Street. Act II., Scene 1. King's Ante-Chamber; Scene 2. Prison in the Tower; Scene 3. Ante-Chamber. Act III., Scene 1. Chamber in the Tower; Scene 2. Hastings' House; Scene 3. Council Chamber in Baynard's Castle. Act IV., Scene 1. The Presence Chamber; Scene 2. Room in the Tower; Scene 3. Tower Hill. Act V., Scene 1. Richmond's Encampment; Scene 2. The Royal Tent; Scene 3. Richmond's Tent; Scene 4. The Battle Field.

stage for close upon two centuries. The Lyceum programme stated that the version then presented was "strictly the original text, without interpolations, but simply with such omissions and transpositions as have been found essential for dramatic representation". This restoration of the original play was commended in all quarters. As for the interpretation of the chief character, it was generally conceded, even by the most adverse of Irving's critics, that the impersonation was a splendid one and that the "mannerisms" had been so subdued as to be almost invisible. The truth was that Irving's supremacy with the public was paramount, and there was no use in flying in the face of the popular verdict. Even Dutton Cook had to relax the studied rigidity of his style. Yet he could not do so without a gibe which was not in strict accordance with facts. "Of late there has been a measure of decline in the fervour of the reception awarded to Mr. Irving's performances of Shakespeare." The great towns of the provinces, it will be observed, had no place for the London critic, and he ignored the warmth of the reception—in the previous month—of Irving as Macbeth. However, in his grudging way, for he had an ineradicable habit of taking back with his left hand that which he gave with his right, he conceded the merits of the rendering. "The performance," he concluded, "will without doubt gain by the further consideration the artist can now bring to his undertaking; experience will teach him to economise his forces, to reduce the inequalities of his portraiture, and to rid himself of the minor defects of redundant action and excessive play of face. But, as it stands, this representation of Shakespeare's Richard may surely take its place among the most remarkable of histrionic achievements. As an actor's first impersonation of a part entirely new to him, it is startling in its originality, in its power, and completeness." The same critic pointed out the inefficiency of the company, so that Irving as Richard had to fight his battles alone—not that this was any new thing for the actor. "The fact that the Lyceum company includes several very inefficient performers may be accepted as a sufficient reason for the excision of much matter which otherwise might well have been retained," he said. "If, for instance, we are to have a ranting Duke of Clarence, it seems but prudent to limit his opportunities of speech; and so, considering the monotonous violence of Miss Bateman's Margaret of Anjou, there is sound judgment manifested in the elimination of that vociferous character from the later acts of the tragedy." He does not otherwise notice the acting of the subsidiary characters in the revival, and Joseph Knight, having dealt exhaustively with the acting of Irving as Richard, merely says: "The remainder of the cast affords little opportunity for favourable comment". At the same time it is only just to state that other writers were in favour of the intelligence of Miss Isabel Bateman as Lady Anne and of the value of Miss Bateman as Queen Margaret. And many old playgoers recall that Mr. Walter Bentley secured great applause for the power and elocutionary skill which he displayed in the delivery of Clarence's dream. It is worthy of note that Mr. A. W. Pinero made his first appearance at the Lyceum as Lord Stanley in this revival.

In autumn of this year Irving had won the right to be included among the "Celebrities at Home," in the *World*, the paper founded and then edited by Edmund Yates. The part dealing with the rooms in Grafton Street, Bond Street, in which the actor then lived, is pleasant reading. After a chatty dissertation upon the characteristic home life of the actor of that time—who, as a rule, greatly favoured the Brompton district—the article dealt with "the exception" in the person of "the gentleman who, above all others in the present day, evokes the applause of the British playgoer. He has pitched his tent within the busy haunts of men, and elaborates his studies of the creations of the Bard of Avon, within cry of St. James's Street clubs. Yet is his dwelling wholly different from the ordinary 'rooms' or 'chambers' tenanted by the wealthy wifeless which abound in the vicinity. The ordinary trophies of the upholsterer's art with which these latter are decorated are indeed to be found in the tragedian's dining-room, and in the room where he courts his slumbers—if rumour is to be believed, not until long after ordinary mortals are at rest. But his study, his sanctum, the room in which he sits deep into the night, reading or musing or chatting—if the odd intermittent fragments of criticism, of anecdote, or enquiry, can be described by so bald a word—has in its appearance much that is quaint and special, and suggestive of nothing in common with the apartment occupied by gilded youth or club-haunting fogey. It has a somewhat sombre air ; for the London sunlight, never too brilliant, is further modified by having to find its way through windows of stained glass, and there are evidences that the sacrilegious brush of the housemaid is never permitted within the precincts. Nowhere could be found a more perfect example of the confusion and neglect of order in which the artistic mind delights. It is visible everywhere—in the yawning gaps in the bookshelves, from which the volumes now strewing the floor have been hastily dragged for reference or study ; in the rucks and folds of the huge tiger-skin rug, which has suffered grievously under the impatient trampings of its owner ; in the table pushed on one side, and groaning under its accumlated litter of books, prints, MSS.—what an enormous amount of dormant talent may there not be in these MSS. with which a favourite actor is so constantly pelted!—its blotting-book, gaping inkstand, and 'chevaux de frise' of pens. The piano is opened—perhaps Robert Stoepel, most sympathetic of musical conductors, left it so, after trying a little introductory 'melo,' quaint and weird as that tremulous composition of his which announces the advent of the Ghost in the 'Corsican Brothers'. At the foot of the music-stool is a large brown paper package, obviously containing boxes of cigars, and bearing the name of a well-known tobacconist in Pall Mall; a Louis Quinze clock ticks from an unsuspected corner ; a few antique chairs shrug their high shoulders, as though completely overwhelmed by the confusion; and the broad sofa seems, from the variety of its contents, to have lost its identity, and to be undecided whether it was intended for a wardrobe, a bookcase, or a portfolio. On the walls are to be found many a 'vera effigies' of the owner's friends, both public and private, but—noteworthy fact when the owner is an actor—no portrait of himself. Here is a proof of Maclise's splendid representation of the play-scene in 'Hamlet'; here are prints of Paul Delaroche's 'Last Banquet' of the Girondins, and of Richelieu sailing in his barge; here, with an autograph inscription 'a L'amico Irving,' is a portrait of Rossi, the Italian tragedian, as Nero; here, with the fragment of a pleasant note, is a clever sketch by John Tenniel, showing his notion for the armour of Othello. In the space between two doors hangs a copy of that marvellous photograph of Charles Dickens, taken on his last visit to New York by Gurney, in which the furrows, deeply graven by time and trouble and hard work, are so pitilessly rendered, but which is, after all, the most satisfactory likeness to those who knew and loved him in his later years. Close by is a medallion of Emile Devrient, another of Charles Young by Marochetti, and a splendid head of Sir John Herschell.

"The owner of these rooms is just now one of the best-known men in London. As he jerks along the street with league-devouring stride, his long, dark hair hanging over his shoulders, his look dreamy and absent, his cheeks wan and thin, the slovenly air with which his clothes are worn in contrast with their fashionable cut, people turn to stare after him and tell each other who he is. His is the high place now in that particular section of society which pats itself complacently on the forehead, and tells itself how clever it is; the dilettante givers of breakfasts and the huntresses of two-legged lions struggle for his company; and he bestows it upon them now and then, though he is happier with an old friend and a cigar and a long talk deep into the night of the ups and downs, the incomings and outgoings, the mysterious workings of that profession which he follows and loves." In the following year, Yates published a volume of these articles in "Celebrities of the Day," beginning, of course, with the Prince of Wales. Next in order came Tennyson, John Bright, Gladstone, and Henry Irving.

CHAPTER XIV.

1877.

Irving contributes to the *Nineteenth Century*—His preface to "Richard III."—He receives various souvenirs—Mr. H. J. Loveday joins the Lyceum—"The Lyons Mail"—A reading in Dublin—Other events—The Prince and Princess of Wales see "The Lyons Mail"—Their verdict on Irving's acting in this play—A long provincial tour—"The Fashionable Tragedian"—A scurrilous pamphlet—Causes Irving to be misrepresented—His explanation and views on the subject—Account of Irving's initiation into, and connection with, Freemasonry.

His impersonation of Richard tempted him to enter the literary field, for it brought him more vividly than ever before the public, and his "Notes on Shakespeare," in the *Nineteenth Century* for April and May, 1877, attracted considerable attention. His acting in "Hamlet," in the scene where the Prince discovers that his interview with Ophelia has been spied upon by the King and her father, had been taken to task in certain quarters, and he now defended his reading of the character at this point. It is in this scene, he contended, that "Hamlet's excitement reaches its greatest height. Goaded within and without, nay, dragged even by his own feelings in two opposite directions, in each of which he suspects he may have gone too far under the eyes of the indignant witnesses, he is maddened by the thought that they are still observing him, and as usual, half in wild exultation, half by design, begins to pour forth more and more extravagant reproaches on his kind. He must not commit himself to his love, nor unbosom his hate, nor has he a moment's pause in which to set in order a continued display of random lunacy. As usual, passion and preconceived gloomy broodings abundantly supply him with declamation which may indicate a deep meaning, or be mere madness, according to the ears that hear it; while through all his bitter ravings there is visible the anguish of a lover forced to be cruel, and of a destined avenger almost beside himself with the horrors of his provocation and his task. The shafts fly wildly, and are tipped with cynic poison; the bow from which they are sped is a strong and constant, though anxious nature, steadily, though with infinite excitement, bent upon the one great purpose fate has imposed upon it. The fitful excesses of his closing speech are the twangings of the bow from which the arrow of avenging destiny shall one day fly straight to the mark."

Another interesting event in connection with this period was the issue of an acting edition of "Richard III.," a small volume of ninety-three pages, some six inches high and less than four wide. It bears the imprint of a City firm—E. S. Boot, 38 Gracechurch Street. It has a brief Preface, signed Henry Irving, as follows: "In the task of arranging Shakespeare's 'King Richard III.' for stage representation—which it has been thought desirable to place before the public in book form—I have been actuated by an earnest wish to rescue from the limbo of 'plays for the closet—not for the stage,' a tragedy, which, in my humble opinion, possesses a variety of action, and a unity of construction, which readily account for its great popularity in the days of the author.

"The task of a succeeding generation overlaid it with ornament as antagonistic to the fashions of our own day as the hair powder and knee-breeches which were then indispensable to the recognised tragic dress. But while fashions change, truth remains unalterable, and the words of Shakespeare now speak to the human soul of human passions as clearly as when they were written, and require no interpolations to convey their lesson to succeeding generations.

"Of the favour with which this version of 'Richard III.' has been received it is not for me to speak. I trust, however, it is not egotism that induces me to add, that the crowning satisfaction to me of this revival, has been the thought that, by this successful restoration of the text of Shakespeare to the London stage, I have been able to lay a laurel spray on the grave of my honoured and regretted friend, the late manager of the Lyceum Theatre.

"*Feb.* 1877.

"HENRY IRVING."

The little book is exceedingly scarce, and is known to very few people, even among the collectors of Irvingiana. Richard had some personal associations of a gratifying kind for the actor. On the first night of the revival, he was presented with the sword which had been used by Edmund Kean in the same character. This was given to him by William Henry Chippendale, who had acted with Kean and had been associated with the Haymarket Theatre for a long period. He was a celebrated impersonator of old men, and, in the character of Polonius, he had played with Irving at the Lyceum in 1874-75. Born in 1801, he lived until 1888, thus enjoying the usual long life of the actor. Another relic of Kean—the Order of St. George, which had been worn by him—was also given to Irving in commemoration of his impersonation of Richard. Not long before, he had been presented, by the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, with a ring worn by David Garrick, who bequeathed it to his butler. It passed, in the course of time, into the possession, in 1865, of Miss Burdett-Coutts, as she then was, and she gave it, in July, 1876, to Henry Irving, "in recognition of the gratification derived from his Shakespearean representations".

One of Irving's most cherished associations with "Richard III." lay in the fact that on the date of the production, 29th January, 1877, the Lyceum forces were strengthened by the addition of Mr. Henry J. Loveday who, on that night, went in front of the house and made notes on the performance for the friend of his youthful days. When Irving was in Edinburgh in 1858-1859, his future stage-manager was the chief violin player in the orchestra of the theatre, and, on the night that Irving took his farewell benefit, as Claude Melnotte, his "chum"—for the actor and the musician were great friends—occupied the conductor's seat. They were friends for nearly half a century, and business associates for over twenty-eight years.

After playing Richard for three months, Irving left the higher walks of the stage for a time. This, of course, was a great opportunity for his opponents, one of whom thought "his return to melodrama one of the best pieces of taste he has yet shown". Still, even melodrama has its good points, and there are many thousands of playgoers alive to-day who bear testimony to the beauty of Irving's acting as the innocent Lesurques, a performance of so fine a nature that, despite the devilry of his Dubosc, it left the stronger impression. The play in which these two characters are introduced is, as most people are aware, founded on fact. In 1796, an innocent man, Joseph Lesurques, was condemned to the guillotine for a murder committed by a notorious captain of a band of robbers, Dubosc, whom he had the misfortune to resemble in appearance. The truth came to light too late for a reprieve, and the unhappy man was executed. Four years after this deplorable miscarriage of justice, the real criminal was discovered and guillotined. There is still to be seen in the cemetery of Père la Chaise a simple white marble monument bearing this pathetic epitaph: "A la mémoire de Joseph Lesurques, victime de la plus déplorable des erreurs humains, 31 Octobre, 1796. Sa veuve et ses enfants, martyrs tous deux sur la terre, tous deux sont réunis au ciel." The remarkable trial furnished the groundwork of "Le Courier de Lyons," a drama by MM. Moreau, Siraudin, and Delacour, first represented at the Theâtre de la Gâité, Paris, on 16th March, 1850, with M. Lacressonière in the dual rôle of Lesurques and Dubosc. The dramatists had the express sanction of the descendants and heirs of Joseph Lesurques for the use of that unhappy man's name. The drama was soon transplanted to England. On 10th March, 1851, it was acted at the Standard Theatre, and on 26th June, 1854, it was represented at the Princess's Theatre, with Charles Kean in the double character. Charles Reade's adaptation—as arranged for the Princess's—was used for the revival of the drama at the Lyceum. The title used at the Lyceum was given to the piece by Mr. J. W. Clark, of the Cambridge A.D.C.

"The Lyons Mail" depends very largely for its success on the special ability of the impersonator of Lesurques and Dubosc. But it is one of those plays which must be acted well by all concerned in its production. Irving had the good support when he first appeared in it—so far as the father, Jerome Lesurques, was concerned—of that fine old actor, Thomas Mead. And Miss Isabel Bateman made much of the small part of Jeannette. But, for the rest, there was much to deplore. The representatives of the boy, Joliquet, and the fop, Courriol, were particularly out of place, if one may judge by some of the condemnation of the moment. "All notion of youth, innocence, frankness, and fear disappeared in the mincing mannerisms and conscious assertiveness of the former," while the Courriol was set down as being "ill at ease, a modern Osric, with the most stagey veneer". Clement Scott, who made these remarks, also observed: "It is strange,

THE LYONS MAIL.

First acted at the Lyceum, 19th May, 1877.

Joseph Lesurques	Mr. Henry Irving.
Dubosc	Mr. Henry Irving.
Jerome Lesurques	Mr. T. Mead.
Didier	Mr. E. H. Brooke.
Joliquet	Miss Lydia Howard.
M. Dorval	Mr. F. Tyars.
Lambert	Mr. Louther.
Guerneau	Mr. Glyndon.
Postmaster at Montgeron	Mr. Collett.
Coco	Mr. Branscombe.
Garçon at Café	Mr. Tapping.
Guard	Mr. Harwood.
Postillion	Mr. Allen.
Courriol	Mr. R. C. Lyons.
Choppard	Mr. Huntley.
Fouinard	Mr. J. Archer.
Durochat	Mr. Helps.
Julie	Miss Virginia Francis.
Jeannette	Miss Isabel Bateman.

Act I., Scene 1. Room in the Café, 17 Rue de Lac, Paris; Scene 2. Exterior of the Inn at Lieursaint, on the Lyons Road. Act II., Scene. Salon in the House of M. Lesurques. Act III., Scene 1. Panelled Chamber overlooking the Garden in M. Lesurques' House; Scene 2. The Prison; Scene 3. First Floor of a Cabaret, overlooking the Place of Execution.

that when so many actors could so successfully perfect such small characters as these, a blot should have been unnecessarily made on a play demanding good acting all round. It will not do, in these days, to neglect the care due to the smallest parts, and, if it were worth the while to do so, fault could be found with many of the minor characters." There were other troubles on the first night to add to the anxieties of the chief actor. Some one had thought it wise to do away with the customary farce which eked out a short programme, the result being that the performance ended at the unusual hour of ten o'clock. This was too much—or rather not enough!—for the occupants of the pit and gallery, and Irving had to do his best to pacify the irate members. "Calls were made for Mr. Reade, calls were made for Mr. Irving, appeals were made for a speech, and, at one time, there seemed a likelihood of a debate on the relative value of farces persistently put up at the Lyceum. But Mr. Irving, with commendable diplomacy, elected to refer the matter to the management." And the press advised Mrs. Bateman that the prices charged for admission were such that an entertainment of greater length was required. These prices, it may be noted, were somewhat less than those which now prevail: dress circle, 5s.; upper circle, 3s.; pit, 2s.; gallery, 1s. The stalls which, in the previous year, were 7s., had now been raised to 10s.

Despite the trials of the first night, "The Lyons Mail" made a great hit, and it ran until the end of the season, filling not only the pit and gallery, but the better parts of the house. This result, of course, was due to the acting of Henry Irving. It is a wonderful proof of his popularity in this piece that he retained the play in his répertoire until the end of his career—over twenty-eight years—and, a fact still more remarkable, his acting in it, far from being dulled by repetition, developed into one of his finest achievements. Frequently as the play was revived at the Lyceum—not to mention the numberless performances by Irving throughout the United Kingdom and in America and Canada—there was advancement, never retrogression, in the portrayal of the two characters. The curious physical resemblance between Lesurques and Dubosc counted for much in the popular view, but the rendering of these characters—the middle-aged, refined, affectionate son and father, and the bullying, brutal drunkard—gave Irving an opportunity for contrast which resulted in two most fascinating

LESURQUES AND DUBOSC IN "THE LYONS MAIL".

portraits. To think of Irving as Lesurques—as thousands of playgoers still remember him—is to recall a splendid picture of innocence, paternal love, and dignity. And the terrible ferocity of the last act—when Dubosc, maddened with brandy and lust for the blood of his victim, watches the approach of Lesurques to the scaffold—is remembered as a picture of appalling ferocity. In France, it may be noted, the play was provided with two endings, the innocent Lesurques being duly executed one night, while, on the other, a reprieve arrived and Dubosc was arrested. The latter conclusion was adopted in the English version.

During the first run of "The Lyons Mail" at the Lyceum, Irving visited Dublin and gave a reading from Shakespeare and Dickens. It was the intention of Mrs. Bateman to end the season on 16th June, and Irving, accordingly, had made a promise to give his readings in Dublin on the following Monday, the 18th. But the success of "The Lyons Mail" was so great that it was desirable to extend the run of that play. Irving, however, kept his engagement in Dublin, a good deal of extra hard work being imposed upon him in consequence. In order to keep faith with his friends and fulfil a promise which he had made, as the outcome of good nature, six months previously, he left London at midnight on the Saturday, after his performance of Lesurques and Dubosc. He was accompanied by the stage-manager of the Lyceum, Mr. H. J. Loveday, and his devoted friend, Frank Marshall. The reading took place, on the Monday afternoon, in the Examination Hall of Trinity College, in the presence of the Provost, the Dean, and a large number of students. It consisted of the third scene of the third act of "Othello," the opening scene of "Richard III.," the scene between David Copperfield and the waiter, and "The Dream of Eugene Aram." He was subsequently entertained to dinner at the Fellows' Table in the College, and he left, on his return to London, on the same evening. Some other incidents belonging to the first six months of 1877 should be noted. For instance, it being the custom to close the London theatres on

Ash Wednesday, Irving gave, in February of this year, a reading from "Macbeth" in the Birmingham Town Hall, for the benefit of the building fund of the Perry Bar Institute. In March, he recited "The Uncle" at a benefit for an old actor, Henry Compton, at Drury Lane. In April, he received an offer of one hundred pounds a night and a percentage of the profits to play in America. In May, his portrait by Whistler, which has since become celebrated, was exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery. His impersonation of Richard III. formed the subject of still another painting, by Edwin Long; and, in July, the Prince and Princess of Wales saw "The Lyons Mail" at the Lyceum, and said that Irving's performance was "one of the best pieces of acting that they had ever witnessed".

"Hamlet" was given on the last night of the season, 31st July. There was little rest for the actor, inasmuch as, in August, he gave a reading, which included scenes from "Hamlet," and "Richard III.," at Southampton, in aid of the restoration fund of St. Michael's Church. In Portsmouth, he began a long provincial tour, his chief plays being "Hamlet," "Richard III.," and "The Lyons Mail". He acted in Liverpool, Preston, Sheffield, Bradford, Newcastle, Glasgow, Dundee, Edinburgh, Greenock, Belfast, Dublin, Birmingham, and Brighton. Although his Richard met with a severe reception in Manchester—for long the stronghold of Barry Sullivan, especially in that character—the tour was a triumph. It had only one real note of unpleasantness—one that can be viewed calmly now, although it was injurious at the time. Now that the years have rolled away, it does not matter, and it is only mentioned here as part of the story of continuous struggle in certain directions which was the actor's lot for so many years. He had achieved great things, and he was generally recognised as the upholder of all that was best on the stage. His popularity, among all classes, was unbounded, in the provinces, as well as in London, and his fame was world-wide. But he was subject to more petty annoyance in the way of cruel caricature by pen and pencil, in pictures and in printed matter, than any other actor who has ever lived. He had patience and he endured, until at last he attained a position in public estimation which was absolutely unassailable. Even with his death, the attacks upon his acting did not cease. He despised the majority of the small-minded people who could not see his point of view because it was not their own, and he treated the writers with the contempt which they deserved. He respected criticism which was sincere and decorous. But he held in derision anything that was either cruel in intention or in effect. When it touched his honour as a man—as in the *Fun* libel—he took action. When his acting was the only concern, he could afford to let time settle the account. For instance, the pamphlet which was industriously circulated when he was touring the country in 1877, only assailed his acting, and, for this reason, his hands were tied. But if such an effusion were perpetrated in the present time—granted that a publisher could be found to take the risk of issuing it—the object of its attack would, in all probability, seek the protection of the law. Irving was an exceptionally busy man in 1877, his success was assured, and he had to keep his mind steadily fixed upon his work in, and for, the theatre. So he allowed "The Fashionable Tragedian" to pass. There was offence even in the title, for it recalled the libel of two years previously. It was issued anonymously, in a brown paper cover, with a cruel caricature of Irving as Mathias outside. It was called "a criticism, with ten illustrations". Its "criticism" was simply an onslaught upon Irving the actor, and its illustrations were caricatures which were all the more hurtful because they were so ingenious. Some six years later, one of the authors, Mr. William Archer, recanted—in part—for some of his remarks in this brochure; his co-author was the late Robert William Lowe, subsequently a great student of English dramatic literature, an authority on the history of the stage, and, personally, a kind and delightful companion. The young men—Mr. Archer was only twenty-one—meant no harm, but such skits as this have power to wound and should not be indulged in lightly.

Irving's great offence, in the eyes of these young writers, seems to have lain in the fact that he was not "a heaven-born actor like Salvini," and that he did not slavishly follow tradition. After an attempt to explain his great position with the public, they indulged in a long essay in extenuation of their argument, which was "merely to prove that he is a very bad actor". There is no occasion to wade through the diatribe, but the opening statement may be quoted as an indication of the abuse—there is no other word for it—which follows: "No actor of this, or indeed of any other, age has been so much and so indiscriminately belauded as Mr. Henry Irving. For more than five years he has been the 'bright particular star' of the British dramatic firmament. Night after night has he filled the dingy old Lyceum, from the front row of the stalls to the back row of the gallery, with audiences which applauded every jerk, every spasm, every hysteric scream—we had almost said every convulsion—in which he chose to indulge. In the provinces he has met with the same success and the same laudation. Newspaper 'critics' have ransacked and exhausted their by no means limited vocabulary in the search for words in which to express his greatness. He is, we are told, the resuscitator of the past glories of the British drama, with the addition of new glories peculiarly his own. He is the 'interpreter of Shakespeare to the multitude,' the apostle of popular dramatic culture. Criticism has not been entirely silent, it is true, but its voice has been drowned in the plaudits of enthusiasm. Men of science, men of learning, poets, philosophers, vie with each other in singing his praises. Bishops eulogise him in after-dinner speeches; statesmen 'tap him on the shoulder while walking down Bond Street,' and introduce themselves to him with expressions of enthusiastic admiration; peeresses engage the stage-box night after night to gaze at his contortions'." It is a curious thought that Irving could have been described as "one of the worst actors that ever trod the British stage" in so-called "leading characters" by these impetuous youths.

It seems incredible that they could have written of him as possessing, among other disqualifications for the stage, "a face whose range of expression is very limited". Many people, even then, must have been surprised to learn that "abject terror, sarcasm, and frenzy are the only passions which Mr. Irving's features can adequately express". Again, "his figure utterly precludes the possibility of dignity, grace, or even ease: some of his most effective attitudes might well be taken for a representation of the last stage of Asiatic cholera—total collapse". As for the great scene with Ophelia, these superior young gentlemen could not find any merit in it. "We should be inclined to apply to it a shorter and uglier term"—than their own, "psychologically subtle"—"and call it vulgar." There was much more of the same sort of "criticism," and although the pamphlet was directed against Irving, the captious critics forgot that Miss Bateman was a woman and an artist, and thus dismissed her Lady Macbeth: "If the actual Lady Macbeth was in any way like Miss Bateman's representation of her, one cannot wonder that her unhappy husband was driven to the most horrible of crimes, only that suicide would certainly have been his first idea". They described Irving's Hamlet as "a weak-minded puppy," his Macbeth as "a Uriah Heep in chain armour," his Othello as an "infuriated Sepoy," and his Richard as "a cheap Mephistopheles". There is no occasion to quote further from an indiscreet pamphlet which, doubtless, its authors afterwards regretted.

"The Fashionable Tragedian" would have died a natural death but, in an unfortunate moment, a writer who called himself Yorick, rushed in with a defence of the actor. He issued, in a grey cover and with a dignified portrait of the distinguished player, a letter concerning Mr. Henry Irving addressed to E. R. H.[1] The defence was not necessary, and as it was not as clever as it might have been, it only drew attention to the brochure by which it had been provoked. As a consequence, a second edition was issued of "The Fashionable Tragedian," in a green cover with a hideous new caricature of Irving as Richard III. The back page of the cover contained a reprint of some of the "Opinions of the Press" on the first edition. These, in justice to the press of this country were, be it said, not by any means favourable to the good taste of the authors of the disparagement. There was a postscript to the second edition in which the writers defended their original position and renewed their attack.

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[1] Probably a mistake for G. R. H., the initials of Mr. G. R. Halkett, who drew the illustrations to the original pamphlet. Mr. Halkett was also possessed of the irresponsibility of youth, for he was but twenty-two years of age. Mr. Archer, who was born on 23rd September, 1856, was eighteen months his junior.

The pamphlet was the cause of a misrepresentation being made in regard to an alleged statement by Irving about the press which necessitated the writing of the following letter: it is printed as published, and it explains itself:

"5th *December*, 1877.

"My attention having been called to the report of a speech alleged to have been spoken by me at a public dinner in Edinburgh, in which newspaper reporters and critics in general are alluded to in insulting terms, I desire to have an opportunity of putting myself right with you and the members of your staff.

"The dinner referred to, at which I was present, was an entirely *private* one, to which I had the privilege of inviting any guest I chose. On that occasion, the conversation turned on a scurrilous pamphlet which had preceded me in Glasgow, Dundee, and Edinburgh, where it was published, and which pamphlet, I was then informed, had been written by four Edinburgh reporters.

"After dinner, my health was proposed, and in a jocose manner the way I had been treated by a certain few members of the Press was alluded to. In my reply, having this pamphlet and its authors exclusively in my mind, I said, in a bantering sort of way, that it was useless to consider everything that was written about one, as a dramatic critic was a man who required training, experience, and culture, so that his point would carry weight; that in every profession there were black sheep; and (still thinking of this pamphlet) I said that dramatic notices were sometimes written by such people; and I estimated their statements by the lowest sums earned in their calling.

"I further said in the same vein—which the entire company, principally composed of literary and artistic men, thoroughly understood—that 'of course I never read the papers,' 'of course I never did this and never did that,' with many other frivolous things too ridiculous to mention, the tone, manner, and meaning being perfectly intelligible to any mind except the dullest.

"So greatly did I feel my obligations to the Press that on the occasion alluded to, I turned to a gentleman who was invited to this dinner at my express desire, and thanked him for the kindly and able manner in which (as I thought and had been told) he had criticised me in a daily paper, with which he was connected. This gentleman replied that the dramatic criticisms had not been written by him, but by one of his confrères, whereupon I begged him to express my thanks to the writer of those criticisms. I then invited him, along with my other friends at the table, to supper during the following week. He replied that, if able, he would gladly come, cordially shook hands, and expressed his pleasure at our meeting.

"I should also say that 'The Press' was proposed, and replied for in grateful terms by this gentleman.

"Judge of my amazement, when, on the following morning, I read in the newspaper with which this gentleman was connected, a serious, lengthy, and inaccurate report of a few jesting words I had said at this perfectly *private* dinner, and in that report no allusion whatever there made to the circumstances in which certain words had been said.

"These, sir, are the simple facts of the case, and I leave it to you and every member of the profession I so highly esteem to say whether the treatment I received was justifiable.

"In nearly every city I have visited, I have been treated by the Press with the greatest consideration, kindness, and courtesy, and many of its members I number amongst my personal friends.

"I am, dear Sir,
"Yours obediently,
"HENRY IRVING."

In this year, 1877, Henry Irving was initiated into freemasonry in the Jerusalem Lodge, by the Master, the late Sir William George Cusins. This lodge, which is one of the few "red apron" lodges, has always prided itself upon having men of distinction among its members. It was the first lodge in England to entertain His Majesty, then Prince of Wales, after his initiation into the Order, and he remained an honorary member of it until his accession to the throne. Irving took his second and third degrees in 1882, when both degrees were conferred upon him by the present Grand Secretary of Freemasons, Sir Edward Letchworth, who, at the time, was Master of the lodge—the ceremony of "passing" was rendered notable by the presence of the Duke of Albany. Among the members of the Jerusalem Lodge who were co-temporaries of Irving were the late Earl of Fife, Sir C. Hutton Gregory, Sir John Monckton, Sir Horace Jones, Sir G. Findlay, Sir W. Allport, Sir Henry Oakley, Sir Miles Fenton, Sir Frederick Harrison, the Ven. Archdeacon Sinclair, Charles Barry, the architect, and Phil Morris, A.R.A. In February, 1887, Irving was one of the founders of the Savage Club Lodge, of which he remained a member until his death. He was the first treasurer of the Savage Club Lodge, but his time was so occupied with his other duties that he had to resign the office in December of the first year, when he was succeeded by Mr. Edward Terry. In 1893, he joined the St. Martin's Lodge, of which he was a member for eleven years. He was a liberal supporter of the masonic charities.

CHAPTER XV.

1878.

Irving acts Louis XI. for the first time—Charles Kean in the character—Irving's complete success—Indifferent support—Farces still popular—"Vanderdecken" produced—A personal success—"The Bells" and Jingle again—Unsatisfactory conditions—Mrs. Bateman resigns—Her tribute to Irving—Contributions to the *Nineteenth Century*—Delivers an address at the Perry Bar Institute—Lays the foundation stone of Harborne and Edgbaston Institution—Gives a reading at Northampton—Presented with addresses—Reads and recites at Belfast in aid of a charity.

IRVING re-opened in London on Tuesday, 26th December, 1877, in "The Lyons Mail". The old-fashioned farce was still in the ascendant, for "Just My Luck" "played the people in" to the melodrama and "Diamond Cut Diamond" saw them out. Irving's impersonations of Lesurques and Dubosc, Mathias, and Charles the First crowded the Lyceum for the next few weeks. While he was thus engaged, he was also studying a character his rendering of which subsequently became famous. On Saturday, 9th March, he acted Louis XI., with such complete success that his enemies were silenced, even though they had, as in the case of Richard III., to qualify their praise by the remark that the actor's mannerisms suited the part! In the course of time, Irving's impersonation of this character improved marvellously and became masterly. Even at first, it was a performance which broke down the strongest barriers of opposition and commanded respect for its supreme skill. He carried the play to success on his own shoulders, as he was but indifferently supported by Mrs. Bateman's company, and the drama, as many modern playgoers are aware, is by no means a work of a high class. Casimir Delavigne had not the gift of originality. In "Marino Faliero," he borrowed from Lord Byron, and his "Louis XI." was indebted to "Quentin Durward"—long a popular novel in France. He imitated Shakespeare in "Les Enfants d'Edouard," Kotzebue in "L'Ecole des Vielliards," and Victor Hugo in "La Fille du Cid". His "Louis XI." was given for the first time at the Theâtre Français on 11th February, 1832, with Ligier—an actor of considerable note in his day—in the title-rôle. The first act, a species of prologue, in which Louis does not appear, might be omitted from representation without any detriment to the play. Nor is a piece without a heroine one which makes an appeal to the average audience. Delavigne went further than his model, for whereas Walter Scott's Louis has some redeeming features, that of the French dramatist is a character of undeniable villainy, and, what is worse, a very monotonous one. Irving realised this latter defect before he acted the part for the first time, and he, accordingly, allowed himself more licence than, perhaps, a strict delineator of the author would have rendered necessary. Again, he had to follow Charles

LOUIS XI.

First acted at the Lyceum, 9th March, 1878.

Louis XI. - - - -	Mr. Henry Irving.
Duke de Nemours - - -	Mr. F. Tyars.
The Dauphin - - - -	Mr. Andrews.
Cardinal D'Alby - - -	Mr. Collett.
Philip de Commines - -	Mr. F. Clements.
Count de Dreux - - -	Mr. Parker.
Jacques Coitier - - -	Mr. J. Fernandez.
Tristan l'Ermite - - -	Mr. W. Bentley.
Oliver le Dain - - -	Mr. J. Archer.
François de Paule - -	Mr. T. Mead.
Monseigneur de Lude - -	Mr. Holland.
The Count de Dunois - -	Mr. Laneton.
Marcel - - - - -	Mr. E. Lyons.
Richard - - - - -	Mr. Smith.
Didier - - - - -	Mr. Branscombe.
Officer of the Royal Guard	Mr. Harwood.
Montjoie - - - -	Mr. Cartwright.
Toison d'Or - - - -	Mr. Tapping.
King's Attendants - -	Messrs. Edwardes and Simpson.
Marie - - - - -	Miss Virginia Francis.
Jeanne - - - - -	Mrs. St. John.
Martha - - - - -	Mrs. Chippendale.

Act I. Exterior of the Castle, Plessis les Tours. Act II. Throne Room in the Castle. Act III. A Forest Glade. Act IV. The King's Bedchamber. Act V. The Throne Room.

Kean in the character, and, for this reason also, he was compelled to be as original as possible. Kean first represented the character, at the Princess's Theatre, on 13th January, 1855, in a version prepared by Dion Boucicault, who condensed the text of the original, substituted blank verse for flowing rhyme, and consulted English prejudice by providing a "happy ending" with the freedom of Nemours. Kean's impersonation was modelled upon that of Ligier and was thought, by many good judges, superior to the original. It was his most successful achievement as an actor, and "was remarkable for its intensity and concentrated power, for its absolute self-command not less than for its moments of sudden abandonment to the vehemence and passion of the situation. In this part, the actor's physical peculiarities, his eccentricities of look and tone, gait and gesture, were, if not forgotten, so merged in his performance, as to lend it valuable support and distinction".

Irving had, quite deliberately, courted comparison with Charles Kean and the other representatives of the part, and he came through the ordeal with flying colours. He made Louis somewhat older than history warranted—for the King was only sixty at the time of his death—and he made other changes, as will be seen presently. He was still criticised, but with decency, for he had now become a power in the land, and, as a matter of fact, there was little in his performance with which the most censorious critic could find fault. It must have caused the actor some amusement, as well as satisfaction, when he found Dutton Cook becoming—for him—quite eulogistic, for he was constrained to admit that the "performance is throughout very masterly, even and consistent, subtle and finished. There is no neglect of the small, delicate touches which give completeness to a picture, while the stronger portions of the design are executed with supreme breadth and boldness. Mr. Irving boasts the great actor's art or gift of at once riveting the attention of his audience; presently his influence extends more and more, until each word and glance and action of this strange king he represents

—so grotesque of aspect, so cat-like of movement, so ape-like of gesture, so venomous in his spite, so demoniac in his rage, and meanwhile so vile and paltry and cringing a poltroon—are watched and followed with a nervous absorption that has something about it of fascination or even of terror. The performance reaches its climax perhaps in the King's paroxysm of fear after Nemours' assault upon him; the actor's passionate rendering of this scene, his panic-stricken cries and moans, prayers and threats, and the spectacle of physical prostration that ensues, affecting the audience very powerfully. The death of the King is elaborately treated, but with no undue straining after the horrible. Here the slipping of the sceptre through the flaccid, nerveless fingers of Louis, the moment after he has announced himself 'strong and capable,' may be noted as an original and ingenious artifice on the part of the actor." Irving also compelled admiration from another lukewarm critic, Joseph Knight: "There was a tremendous display of power in the closing scenes of the fourth and fifth acts. These acts, however, were comparatively ineffective"—in the judgment of the critic, but not in that of the audience, be it observed. "In earlier scenes, there were no signs whatever of effort, and in these the greatest and most undisputed triumph was obtained. There is no need to dwell on single blemishes or shortcomings in the case of a performance like this. It is pleasanter to admit frankly that, so far as concerns the conception of the character, especially on its comic side, it is worthy of warm praise."

It would be easy, but not to the purpose, to quote columns of enthusiastic eulogy of this performance. It redounds greatly to the credit of the impersonator of Louis that he won his success in spite of comparison and entirely on his own merit. The scenic accessories were very creditable, but the interpretation of the majority of the minor characters was sadly inefficient. "Much of the acting was wretched, however—so deficient in spirit and life that, had the chief person been less powerfully presented, the success of the venture would have been compromised." On the other hand, the stage-management was admirable, and the incidental music, under the direction of Robert Stoepel—the musical conductor during the Bateman régime—was an important help. The distant hymn in the fourth act, where Louis sits warming himself, was an extremely effective moment. The death scene was so tremendously impressive on the first night that the audience remained spell-bound. It had expressed its enthusiasm with great vehemence up to this point, and it was not until the reaction had come that it gave way to cheer upon cheer such as was given whenever afterwards—for over twenty-eight years—Henry Irving acted Louis. The enthusiasm, on the first night, was such that Irving was obliged to make a speech of thanks, and he took advantage of the occasion to pay a gracious tribute to the widow of Charles Kean for her kindness in allowing him the use of Boucicault's version of the drama, and for her assistance, in other directions, in regard to the Lyceum revival. One of the most critical notices of the performance appeared in *Punch*, which prophesied the enduring success of the actor in the part and praised him highly. It also pointed out certain blemishes, as it considered them, in his reading. One of these faults, as it thought, was the hypocrisy which he gave vent to when the King was saying the Angelus. "Now Louis was superstitious, but he was no fool: he believed and trembled: he prayed because he feared: he sinned because his faith was without love. His devotion, the result of his perfect belief in, and abject terror of, an Eternity of Punishment and Reward, was most intense; it never could have been, in outward expression, contemptible buffoonery. To have seen the attitude of Louis in prayer would have rejoiced a saint; to have known his heart at the time would have made angels weep. Mr. Irving can have no authority for this grotesque, nay burlesque, devotion, for had he even been guided by Sir Walter Scott, he would have found that Louis 'doffed, as usual, his hat, selected from the figures with which it was garnished that which represented his favourite image of the Virgin, placed it on a table, and kneeling down, repeated reverently the vow he had made'."

He never altered this reading, for he felt that the gloom of the play required as much lightness as he could impart into it, and this was just one of the opportunities which seemed a relief to the monotony. Farces were still popular at this period, and "Louis XI." was preceded by one—"Turning the Tables".

After a run of some seventy nights, "Louis XI." gave way to the production of a new play, written by Mr. Percy Fitzgerald in conjunction with the late W. G. Wills. It was in five acts, and was a version of the immortal legend of "The Flying Dutchman". The story first appeared in English in *Blackwood's Magazine*, in May, 1821, under the title, "Vanderdecken's Message Home, or the Tenacity of Natural Affection". From this came "The Flying Dutchman," written by Edward Fitzball, and brought out at the Adelphi Theatre on 4th December, 1826, with T. P. Cooke as a pantomimic Vanderdecken, who emerged from the sea amid blue flames and waving aloft the piratical emblem of a black flag decorated with the traditional skull and cross-bones. It was in this play, which contained some excellent music by Herbert Rodwell, that Wagner found the germs of "Der Fliegende Holländer". The poetical idea of the curse being lifted from the Dutchman through the love of a faithful woman, willing to sacrifice her life in order to save his soul, was due to Heine and utilised by Wagner. The opera was first performed in London in 1876, and, as related by Mr. Fitzgerald, "the idea had occurred to many and, not unnaturally, that here was a character exactly suited to Irving's methods. He was, it was often repeated, the 'ideal' Vanderdecken. He himself much favoured the suggestion, and after a time the 'Colonel' entrusted me and my friend Wills with the task of preparing a piece on the subject. For various reasons, the play was laid aside, and the death of the manager and the adoption of other projects interfered. It was, however, never lost sight of, and, after an interval, I got ready the first act, which so satisfied Irving that the scheme was once more taken up. After many attempts and shapings and re-shapings, the piece was at last ready—Wills having undertaken the bulk of the work, I myself contributing, as before, the first act. The actor himself furnished some effective situations, notably the strange and original suggestion of the Dutchman's being cast upon the shore and restored to life by the waves. . . . Nothing could be more effective than his first appearance, when he was revealed standing in a shadowy way beside the sailors, who had been unconscious of his presence. This was his own subtle suggestion. A fatal blemish was the unveiling of the picture,[1] on the due impressiveness of which much depended, and which proved to be a sort of picturesque daub, greeted with much tittering—a fatal piece of economy on the part of the worthy manageress."

VANDERDECKEN.

First acted at the Lyceum, 8th June, 1878.

Philip Vanderdecken	Mr. Henry Irving.
Nils	Mr. James Fernandez.
Olaf	Mr. Walter Bentley.
Pastor Anders Been	Mr. Edmund Lyons.
Alderman Jorgen	Mr. A. W. Pinero.
Jans Steffen	Mr. R. Lyons.
Soreen	Mr. Archer.
Nurse Birgit	Miss Pauncefort.
Christine	Miss Jones.
Jetty	Miss Harwood.
Old Nancy	Miss St. John.
Thekla	Miss Isabel Bateman.

Act I.—Evening, Scene. Cottage of old Nils, the Pilot, near the entrance of the Christiania Fjord. Act II.—Daybreak, Scene 1. Quay of the Fishing Village; Scene 2. Interior of the Cottage. Act III., Scene. Path leading by the cliff to the cottage of Nils; distant view of the Skager Rack. Act IV., Scene 1. Interior of the Cottage; Scene 2. Deck of the Phantom Ship.—The Haven.

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[1] From her youth, Thekla, the heroine, has felt herself prompted by mysterious solicitation or warning to await some call of fate or duty in connection with a portrait that has been discovered in her father's house. At length, wearied by delay, she consents to betrothal to a handsome young sailor, Olaf, the man of her father's choice. While the ceremony is in progress, Vanderdecken appears. Without any expression of wonderment or coyness, but, on the contrary, with a complete possession which conquers every maidenly instinct, Thekla surrenders herself to the man whom she has expected for so long—the man of the portrait—and goes with him on board the fatal ship.

This "romantic poetic drama" was produced on 8th June, but a summer of unusual warmth, added to the gloom of the play, soon sealed the fate of this version of the old story. There was considerable merit in the play, however, and the poetical language of Mr. Wills was one of its most worthy features. Irving had little more to do than appear picturesque and impressive—an accomplishment which needed no effort on his part—but it was generally conceded that the character was not worthy of so fine an actor. Vanderdecken made way, after a brief reign of only a month, for a revival, on Monday, 8th July, of "The Bells" and "Jingle," for the benefit of the creator of Mathias. He was received with a remarkable scene of enthusiasm, the plaudits at the conclusion of the play in which he had first drawn the town being remarkable, even at the Lyceum in those days—and for many years afterwards, when thunders of applause constantly testified to the popularity of the actor. On the occasion under notice, he was greeted with a tempest of cheers on making his first entrance as Mathias, called twice at the end of the first act, thrice at the end of the second, and, after five calls at the end, "bouquets and laurel wreaths were showered upon him in abundance. There were hand-clappings and hurrahs, and wavings of handkerchiefs and shouts of congratulation, and, indeed, all possible signs of admiration for the popular idol." "Jingle," of course, was a re-arrangement by James Albery of his "Pickwick," in which Irving had acted in October, 1871. Instead of the four acts of "Pickwick," there were now six tableaux which were labelled Jingle the Stroller, Jingle the Lover, Jingle the Financier, Jingle the Dandy, Jingle the Swindler, and Jingle the Penitent. At the end of Jingle's adventures, there was another tremendous outburst of enthusiasm, and Irving, in complying with the demands for a speech, said: "Ladies and Gentlemen,—I hope to have the honour of appearing before you again ere the season closes, and then I shall have an opportunity of saying a few words. I have to thank you for the brilliant attendance here to-night. Such occasions as these, few as they are in the experiences of a life,

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VANDERDECKEN.

must of necessity make a lasting impression. Your kindness I never shall forget. I wish I could have done more for you to-night. Some friends asked me to recite, and if they should be present on the last night of the season, I shall be happy to oblige them. Some asked that I would play Hamlet, and these I may inform that that tragedy will be revived next season. I cannot express all that I feel, but you may be assured I am more than grateful, and that I shall always strive to do all I can to please you and to meet your wishes."

This programme proved so popular that it was repeated until the end of the season—in August. In the meantime, Dame Rumour had been busy, for it was openly said that Irving was dissatisfied with some of the old-fashioned methods which still prevailed at the Lyceum, and it was felt that he could not remain much longer in a position which compelled him to be—as undoubtedly he was—the vital attraction of the theatre, yet left him no real voice in the management of the house. Mrs. Bateman moreover—and not unnaturally—could not see that her own children had any defects, and she insisted upon the retention of Miss Isabel Bateman as the leading actress. The position was intolerable, and Irving decided that he could no longer remain in it. His decision was tantamount to Mrs. Bateman's retirement. So that, automatically, the theatre fell into his hands, and he acquired the lease of the Lyceum. The theatre closed, somewhat suddenly, in the third week of August, and the old manageress issued a valedictory address in the course of which she paid a just tribute to her successor. Dated 31st August, 1878, it ran as follows: " Mrs. Bateman begs to announce that her tenancy of the Lyceum Theatre terminates with the present month. For seven years it has been associated with the name she bears. During the three years and a half that the business management has been under her special control, the liberal patronage of the public has enabled her to wind up the affairs of each successive season with a profit. During this period 'Macbeth' was produced for the first time in London without interpolation from Middleton's 'Witch'. Tennyson's first play, 'Queen Mary,' was given; and Shakespeare's 'King Richard III.,' for the first time in London from the original text. Mrs. Bateman's lease has been transferred to Mr. Henry Irving, to whose attraction as an artist the prosperity of the theatre is entirely attributable, and she confidently hopes that under his care it may attain higher artistic distinction and complete prosperity. In conclusion, Mrs. Bateman ventures to express her gratitude for the kindness and generosity extended to her by the public—kindness that has overlooked many shortcomings and generosity that has enabled her to faithfully carry out all her obligations to the close of her tenancy."

Apart from his proud position as an actor, Henry Irving had achieved distinction as a writer and speaker on the subject of the stage before he became his own manager. In 1877, he contributed two articles, one of which has been alluded to already, entitled "An Actor's Notes on Shakespeare," to the *Nineteenth Century*. The first of these, in the April number, was in support of his contention that the Third Murderer in "Macbeth" was not—as some commentators urge—the Thane himself, but an attendant who figures in the opening of the third act. In his second article, on Hamlet and Ophelia, in the May issue of the publication, he sought to exonerate Ophelia from complicity in the plot of the King and Polonius to spy upon the Prince of Denmark: "There is nothing in the text or stage directions that convicts her of actual complicity. Her feeling was somewhat vague and confused, especially as she would not be taken more into confidence than necessary. Much that was said in the interview between the Queen, the King, and Polonius might have been spoken apart from Ophelia, the room in the castle being probably a large one, in which a knot of talkers might not be overheard by a pre-occupied person. When suggestions of this kind were condemned as over-refined, it is, I think, too often forgotten that it must be settled between stage-manager and players, in every case, how the latter are to dispose themselves when on the stage; that Shakespeare himself must have very much affected the complexion of his plays by his personal directions; that the most suggestive and therefore most valuable of these have been lost; and that in reproducing old plays, in which there is much scope and even great necessity for subtle indications of this kind, nothing can be too refined which intelligibly conveys to an audience a rational idea of each individuality and a consistent theory of the whole." In the latter part of this passage is found the idea which dominated the actor in all his Shakespearean and other productions. His third essay, in the same magazine, appeared in February, 1879, and in it he explained his reasons for discarding the use of pictures or medallions in Hamlet's scene with his mother in the Queen's closet.

On the 6th of March, 1878, the year which was destined to see the beginning of his glorious reign at the Lyceum, he delivered, in his capacity as president, an address at the Perry Bar Institute, near Birmingham. In accepting the post thus conferred upon him, he wrote: "To be numbered with the representatives of so admirable an institution is, I can sincerely say, one of the greatest distinctions I can hope to attain. The honour which has been conferred upon me is the more appreciated as I recognise in it a tribute not so much to myself as to my profession, and to the elevating character of the Drama as one of the intellectual influences of the time. By this proof of their esteem for an actor, the Council of the Perry Bar Institute have offered the best answer to those who have misrepresented the true spirit of the stage, as inconsistent with the moral and educational progress of the nation." The opening part of his address, which was entitled "The Stage," was as follows: "Standing here, as I do, in succession to distinguished men with whom it would be arrogance to compare myself, it is natural that a feeling of affectionate reverence should come over me for the art to which my life has been devoted. To it, I owe all. To it, not least of all, I owe the honour of speaking to you to-day. It were strange if I could forget, or at such a moment prefer any other theme than the immemorial and perpetual association of the stage with the noblest instincts and occupations of the human mind." The address was one of the most eloquent and vigorous appeals for fair play ever made on behalf of the stage, and, if he had done nothing else in his career but this, his brother and sister players would be mightily be-holden to him. The essay is far too long for anything like full quotation, but some of its most notable passages may be given: "The stage whose cause I plead is that which Shakespeare worked for and made immortal. It is that which he would have religiously preserved, in defiance of all current immoral tastes. I advocate the stage, as at its best it is among us; as it may be in every theatre in the kingdom, as it would be if you, the public, would make it so."

He then paid to Samuel Phelps one of the highest eulogies that could possibly be bestowed by one actor upon another, and his tribute to Macready was no less remarkable. In connection with the latter actor, he recalled the fact that, not long after Byron's bitter denunciation of the stage of his time, "came the admirable lesseeship of Macready, with its grand contributions, both to the literature of the stage and the character of the theatre. Byron's 'Werner' and 'Sardanapalus' were impersonated by Macready, an actor I never had the good fortune to see, but who was not, I believe and am told, unworthy of the best days of the stage, though pursued during a part of his career by the shafts of malignity which fastened on the original genius which was his glory"—words which must have been uttered with some poignancy, for the speaker himself had already suffered keenly from "the shafts of malignity". In the concluding passages of his address, the actor gave utterance to his profession of faith. "We go forth," he said, "armed with the luminous panoply which genius has forged for us, to do battle with dulness, with coarseness, with apathy, with every form of vice and evil. In every human heart there gleams a bright reflection of this shining armour. The stage has no lights or shadows that are not lights of life and shadows of the heart. To each human consciousness it appeals in alternating mirth and sadness, and will not be denied. Err it must, for it is human, and, being human, it must endure. The love of acting is inherent in our nature. Watch your children at play, and you will see that almost their first conscious effort is to act and to imitate. It is an instinct, and you can no more repress it than you can extinguish thought. Some of the earliest drafts of the stage are current still, endorsed by many names of great actors who have not lessened their credit, and who have increased and quickened their circulation. Some of its latest achievements are not unworthy of their predecessors. Some of its youngest devotees are at least as proud of its glories and as anxious to preserve them as any who have gone before. Theirs is a glorious heritage. I ask you to honour it. They have a noble, but a difficult, and sometimes a disheartening task. I ask you to encourage it. No word of kindly interest or criticism dropped in the public ear from friendly lips goes unregarded or is unfertile of good.

"I hope I shall not be thought to be adopting too humble and apologetic a key if I plead for actors, not merely that their labours have honour, but that their lives be regarded with kindly consideration. Their work is hard, intensely laborious —feverish and dangerously exciting. It is all this even when successful. It is often nothing short of heartbreaking when success is missed or sickeningly delayed.

"In our art of acting we strive to embody some conception of our poets, or to revive some figure of history. We win if we can. If we fail we have only 'our shame and the odd hits,' and, whether we fail or not, the breath of applause and the murmurs of censure are alike short-lived and our longest triumphs are almost as brief as either.

"In the long run of popular remembrance the best reward to be hoped for by those of us who most succeed is to be cited to unbelieving hearers, when we are dead and gone, as illustrations of the vast superiority of bygone actors to anything that is to be seen on the stage of to-day.

"Such a life is fraught with various and insidious temptations, and should be solaced by the thoughtfulness, brightened by the encouragement, softened by the liberal estimation of the public, instead of being held at arm's length by social prejudice, or embittered by uncharitable censoriousness.

"We actors have in charge a trust and a deposit of enormous value, such as no dead hand can treasure. Upon our studies, our devotion, our enthusiasm must depend thoughts and emotions of coming times which no literary tradition can pass down to the future. The living voice, the vivid action, the tremulous passion, the animated gesture, the subtle and variously placed suggestion of character and meaning—these alone can make Shakespeare to your children what Shakespeare is to you. Only these can open to others with any spark of Shakespeare's mind the means of illuminating the world. Such is our birthright and yours—such a succession in which it is ours to labour and yours to enjoy. If you will uphold the stage, honestly, frankly, and with wise discrimination, the stage will uphold in future, as it has in the past, the literature, the manners, the morals and the fame of our country."

Another high compliment in connection with an institution of a similar nature to that at Perry Bar—a society, by the way, affiliated with the Midland Institute—was paid to the actor five months after the delivery of the above address. On 12th August—a few days after which Mrs. Bateman's management of the Lyceum ended—he laid the foundation stone of the Harborne and Edgbaston Institute. He profited by his presence to again urge his favourite plea on behalf of the actor—one of which he never tired throughout the entire course of his career. "It is not for me," he said, "to speak in detail of the course of study to be pursued at your Institute—to recommend one branch of study in preference to another; but, speaking as an actor—" he invariably insisted upon his own profession when addressing a body of spectators out of the theatre—he felt that "they would see that it was as difficult for player as for professor to forget his calling for five minutes—he was glad to know that they would not leave out of their culture that legitimate development of the imagination without which life was but a dry routine. If they did not idealise something, this was a painfully prosaic world. Poetry and fiction did much to lighten their care, and for many people the drama did more, for it sometimes helped many—especially the poor, the uncultured, and unlettered—to a right appreciation of life. He did not argue—and he was sure they did not expect him to argue—whether the dramatic exposition had or had not a beneficial influence in the main upon society. If they differed on that point he should not have been there, and he should not have had the satisfaction of having been chosen by his friends at Perry Bar as the representative of the association of dramatic art with the educational work. With those people who maintained that there was a something radically vicious in the whole theory and principle of the stage—well, they must live as comfortably as they could. Such persons would like to rob actors of their audiences, but actors did not bear them any malice for that. What sensible men had to do was not to make futile attempts to destroy an institution which was bound up with some of the best instincts of human nature, but to strive to remove its abuses and elevate its tone. He was sure the members of that Institute would never forget what they owed, and what the world owed, to that great, supreme genius who had shed immortal lustre on the dramatic literature of the country. Far above the merits of any individual actor, there was this consideration, that if he aimed at the highest standard of his profession, he helped thousands to a fellowship, sympathy, and intelligence with the great mind which gave to the drama its noblest form. But some people said, 'Oh, we think Shakespeare very admirable, and if you played nothing but his works at every theatre we should be delighted to support you'. It seemed to him that one might almost as well say, 'if every book of poetry I take up has not the lofty inspiration of Milton, I must refuse to support poetry'. But it was impossible for Shakespeare to be played in every theatre, for many obvious reasons. In dramatic representation, as in everything else, there must be a variety of tastes. Art had many phases, and every one of them contained something admirable and excellent in its way. Certainly, the higher the general level of their culture, the more exalted would be their taste; and he felt assured that the efforts of the members of that Institute and kindred Institutes would be directed to foster what was worthiest in dramatic art."

During a visit to Northampton, Irving told at the meeting of the Shakespeare Society of that town, an anecdote which was widely copied, embellished, and distorted. As he first related it, the story went that, ten years previously, that is to say, in the summer of 1868, while passing through Stratford-on-Avon in the company of his friend Toole, he saw a rustic sitting on a fence. "That's Shakespeare's house, isn't it?" he asked, pointing to the building. "Yes." "Ever been there?" "No." "How long has he been dead?" "Don't know." "Many people come here?" "Yes, lots." "Been to the house?" "No, never been to the house." "What did he do?" "Don't know." "Brought up here?" "Yes." "Did he write for the *Family Herald* or anything of that sort?" "Oh, yes; he writ." "What was it? You must know." "Well," said the rustic, "I think he writ for the Bible."

His reading at Northampton was given on 8th August, in the Town Hall, in aid of a fund for the restoration of Hartwell Church. The programme comprised "The Feast of Belshazzar," "The Captive," scenes from "Hamlet," "Richard III.," and "David Copperfield," and "The Dream of Eugene Aram"—an entertainment of considerable length, but Irving never spared himself on such occasions. After the reading, came a supper party in the Council Chamber and the presentation of a beautifully illuminated address. "To realise the true aspirations of poetic genius, and to give adequate expression to the true emotions of the soul, is," it said, "the highest triumph of the player. This enviable distinction has been attained by few, and it is most gratifying to know that among the honoured ones your name is unmistakably enrolled. It is the earnest hope of this society that you may live long to grace the art of which you are so distinguished an ornament, and which, as a moral teacher, is so potent, and as an intellectual recreation so fascinating." The presentation was made, on behalf of the Northampton Shakespeare Society, by the Rev. Mr. Sanders, who said, thanks to the splendid genius of their honoured guest, the prospects of the stage at that moment were particularly bright. In the course of his speech in reply, Irving assured the company that, although he had not done very much, what he had done was the outcome of a reverent desire to get at the core of the poet's meaning. An actor might be very dignified and very declamatory, but unless he endeavoured to lay bare the springs of the character he represented, his work would be of little use. The stage was governed by traditions compared with which the laws of the Medes and Persians were very elastic; but it was possible, he thought, "even in these degenerate days, to throw some new light on the poet's meaning; and, although the persons who attempted that might be looked upon by many people as rather dangerous characters," such an endorsement as they had given that evening of the contrary opinion could not be otherwise than gratifying.

On the following Monday, as already recorded, he laid the foundation stone of the Harborne and Edgbaston Institute. Here, also, an illustrated address was presented to the actor. "We esteem it a great privilege," it said, "to associate your name with our undertaking—a name which so worthily stands in the first rank of dramatic art. We trust you may be long spared to adorn the profession you have adopted, and to continue your praiseworthy endeavours to elevate the drama to its high and proper position. Amongst these arduous duties may you still find time to assist those who, like ourselves, may be desirous of increasing the sources of mental and rational enjoyment, and of knitting communities together in bonds of fellowship and goodwill." Three days later, Irving gave some readings, in aid of the Samaritan Hospital, Belfast, in the Ulster Hall of that city. The programme was similar to that at Northampton. He had no holiday this summer, for, his various readings and addresses over, his provincial tour began immediately, the Lyceum, meanwhile, being occupied by the eldest Miss Bateman with a revival of Tom Taylor's drama, "Mary Warner," in which she had the support of Mr. James Fernandez, the late John Billington, and her sister, Miss Virginia Francis.

CHAPTER XVI.

1878.

A triumphal tour—Praise from Liverpool and Dublin—A speech in Dublin—Manchester recognises the beauty of his Hamlet—And extols his Richelieu—Sheffield braves the wind and the wet—Irving's views on a National Theatre set forth—Gives readings in Edinburgh and Glasgow in aid of the sufferers by the failure of the City of Glasgow Bank—Letter from him in regard to America—"Becket" being written for him—Death of old friends—Evil prognostications—His policy for the future of the Lyceum outlined—Miss Ellen Terry engaged for the Lyceum—Her career up to this period.

IRVING'S tour of 1878 was a series of artistic and pecuniary triumphs. From Leicester and Preston, he proceeded to one of his strongholds, Liverpool, where he appeared as Hamlet. The Alexandra Theatre—a large house, now converted into a music-hall—was packed from floor to ceiling and the demeanour of the audience was a high tribute to the performance. The spectators listened eagerly to every word that fell from Hamlet's lips, and, from the opening of the play until its close, silence reigned supreme save when plaudits rang through the house. "To the genuine student of Shakespeare's meaning," said the *Daily Post*, "Mr. Irving's Hamlet affords, in all its parts, and especially in the refined and intellectual connection of its parts—in its silence as well as in its speech—in its previsions as well as in its realisations—a degree of instruction and suggestion, a varied stimulus to thought, such as far outweighs in truth and value all mere popular effect. And in addition to all this, it transcends in popular effect, at the point where this is permissible and desirable, every other impersonation with which experience or tradition acquaints us. Mr. Irving, caring little in the main for those prompt successes with an audience, which in

'Hamlet' are as easily attainable as they are inappropriate and out of the spirit of the play, seizes the one great opportunity with magnificent power. During the rest of the action he is a rare embodiment of the irresolute, poetical, fate-driven, fascinating frailty of temperament which the great dramatist has with such originality associated with Hamlet's mental vigour. The effect of the play-scene was never greater than last night, and no audience has ever more clamorously confessed the magic of the actor's overwhelming tragic force in executing this sublime conception, which brings the passion of the play within the domain of irresistible reality, without sacrificing—on the contrary, rather heightening—its lofty poetry." "Richelieu" and "Louis XI." were also played in Liverpool, and, of course, were warmly received.

He next proceeded to Dublin where the greeting was, if possible, warmer than on his visits in 1876 and 1877. His Richelieu and Louis XI.—which, unlike his Hamlet, were new to Dublin—took his Irish friends by surprise. "The general satisfaction so warmly evinced throughout," said one critic, "affords proof that rant and roar and strut are not the qualities by which is compelled the approbation of a Dublin audience. The performance"—that of "Richelieu"—"as far as the principal personage was concerned, was quiet and subdued, but full of force, power, and impressiveness. Every minute detail, from the comparatively trifling episode where he examines Huguet's arquebus, to the moment where he falls, pallid, shrinking, helpless, into his chair, at the commencement of the last scene, was most delicately elaborated. His manner with Julie was most gentle and tender; his comedy refined and subtle; his bursts of anger truly vivid and eloquent." Equal enthusiasm was displayed by the press and public of Dublin towards his Louis XI. On the last night but one of the engagement, Friday, 4th October, he made a speech, the manuscript of which is in the Hennell collection. It is evident that it was written with extreme care and it shows the infinite pains which he took over such comparatively minor details. "I cannot," he said, "let this occasion pass without expressing my heartfelt thanks for your kindness and help in the present and in the past. You can imagine what a delight it has been to me to find that on each occasion that I have come amongst you I have gained new friends without losing the old. This I know, for although the numbers have increased on each successive occasion, I see every night the old familiar faces and hear the voices that I know and like so well. For your welcome and—far more than all—for your sympathy and for your appreciation of my work and efforts—how am I to thank you? Those only *can* know the exquisite delight of sympathetic applause who have spent their lives in the patient, loving study of an art, and, borne up by the hope of a joy such as is mine to-night, have lived through all the bitterness of disappointed hopes and baffled aspirations."

On 7th October, he began a fortnight's engagement at the Theatre Royal, Manchester. The local critics who, in the previous year, had written disparagingly of his Richard, now reluctantly admitted his claims to recognition as Hamlet and Richelieu, and went into extravagance of praise over his Louis. "There is one crucial test of a Hamlet," said the *Guardian*, "which Mr. Irving has borne, and that should be accepted as in some degree a measure of success. He has thoroughly individualised the part, and large houses are never wanting to witness and applaud when he forms the central figure of the play. An actor must soar far beyond mediocrity to bear the test of time in this most exacting of all characters. This Mr. Irving has done, and his most adverse critic cannot gainsay his success." He had strong opposition during this engagement. Not only were the times bad in a financial sense in Manchester, but Barry Sullivan, then in the height of his popularity, was pitted against him. But he held his own, even his Richelieu—one of the most popular of Sullivan's impersonations, as it was one of his most robustious performances—was recognised as a fine piece of acting. The *Examiner*, in allusion to Irving's rendering of the Cardinal, said: "There have been actors in some respects more powerful than

Mr. Irving who have subordinated to a lofty conception of a mighty and inflexible ruler of the destinies of a nation all those lighter phases of his character which the dramatist supplied. By Mr. Irving's naturalistic method that fault is avoided, and as under the developing solution of his talent the portrait comes forth, we feel that this is no mere creation of the poet's fancy, and something more than a clever example of the actor's power; but some such a man as Richelieu may well have been only greater in his intellect than, and not different in his species from, his contemporaries. The beauty of Mr. Irving's interpretation is its naturalness and its thorough consistency; but it is no less distinguished by its energy and its exquisite art." As for Louis XI. the writers could not find words of sufficient eloquence with which to express themselves. The *Guardian* went so far as to allow itself to describe the performance not only as "magnificent" but as "one of the most complete and powerful efforts the present generation has seen".

Visits to Greenock, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Sheffield, and Birmingham, all told the same tale of houses crowded to their utmost capacity and columns of praise without a jarring note. Each town vied with the other in the warmth of its demonstrations. This was particularly noticeable in Sheffield. "In spite of the wind and the wet, there was not a vacant seat in the Theatre last night when the famous player was to repeat the impersonation with which he charmed Sheffield audiences twelve months ago. It is one of the most cheering concomitants of theatrical diversion to see a crowded 'house,' eager and attentive, bending forward in perfect stillness to catch the accents of the performers. This is what the patrons of the play did last evening from the very moment of the rising of the act-drop to the fall of the heavy green-baize curtain. The entire building as far as the footlights glistened with faces, and when the occasion came, as it very often did, for a demonstration of hands and feet, the unanimity and heartiness were irresistibly impressive as a mere spectacle."

Such gratifying scenes, which were now the ordinary occurrences of Irving's public life, were some recompense for the hardships he had endured. But they did not lessen his energy. On the contrary, they were a further spur to his ambition. The four months' tour ended in Birmingham in the middle of December. Despite the hard work of rehearsing, acting, and travelling, he was giving his constant attention to his plan of campaign at the Lyceum—engaging his company and suggesting alterations in the theatre. Nor was his pen idle during all this extraordinarily busy time. The December number of one of the magazines contained a most interesting article from his pen on "The Grave of Richard III."; and, being asked for his views concerning a National Theatre, for a paper which was read at the Social Science Congress in October, he wrote as follows: "The question of the establishment of a National Theatre is surrounded by so many difficulties, and has so many side issues, that the time at present at my disposal does not allow me to go properly into it. The two questions which must from the beginning be held in view are: Is a National Theatre desirable? Is its establishment upon a permanent basis a possibility? With regard to its desirability, I have little, if any, doubt. In this country, artistic perfection of a high ideal is not always the road to worldly prosperity; and so long as open competition exists there will always be found persons whose aim is monetary success rather than the achievement of good work. In order that the stage may be of educational value, it is necessary that those who follow its art should have an ideal standard somewhat above the average of contemporary taste. This standard should be ever in advance, so that as the taste and education of the public progress, the means for their further advancement should be ready. To effect this some security is necessary. If the purifying and ennobling influence of the art is to be exercised in such a manner as to have a lasting power, it is necessary that the individual be replaced by something in the shape of a corporation, or by the working of some scheme by its nature fixed and permanent. It would, I think, be at present unadvisable to touch upon the subject of State subsidy with reference to the British stage. The institutions of this country are so absolutely free that it would be dangerous—if not destructive—to a certain form of liberty to meddle with them. 'Quid pro quo' is a maxim which holds good of State aids, and a time might come when an unscrupulous use might be made of the power of subsidy. Besides, in this country, the State would never grant monetary aid to individual enterprise under any guarantees whatsoever. As the State could not possibly of itself undertake the establishment and management, the adoption of some corporate form would be necessary with reference to the stage before the subsidy could be raised with any possibility of success.

"A 'National Theatre' implies an institution which, in its nature, is not either limited or fleeting. Such a scheme must be thorough, must rest upon a very secure basis, and must conform to the requirements of art, polity, and commerce. It must be something which, in the ordinary course of things, will, without losing any of its purpose or any of its individuality, follow with equal footsteps the changes of the age. In order to do this, it must be large, elastic, and independent. Let us consider these conditions. Firstly, as to magnitude. As the National Theatre must compete with private enterprise, and be with regard to its means of achieving prosperity weighted with a scrupulosity which might not belong to its rivals, it should be so strong as to be able to merge in its steady average gain temporary losses, and its body should be sufficiently large to attempt and achieve success in every worthy branch of histrionic art. Secondly, the corporate body should be to a certain extent elastic. The production of talent in a country or an age is not always a fixed quantity; and whilst for the maintenance of a high standard of excellence no one manifestly under the mark of his fellows should be admitted, all those worthy of entrance should be absorbed. Thirdly, the National Theatre should be independent. Once established under proper guarantees, it should be allowed to work out its own ideas in its own way.

Art can never suffer by the untrammelled and unshackled freedom of artists—more especially when the idiosyncrasies of individuals, with the consequent possible extravagance, are controlled by the wisdom and calmness of confluent opinion. The difficulties of systematisation would be vast, but the advantages would be vast also. The merits of the concentration of purpose of men following kindred pursuits have been tested already, and the benefits both to individuals and the bodies are known. Our art alone has yet no local habitation, no official recognition, no political significance. Should the scheme of a National Theatre be carried out, great results might follow—much good to the great body of aspirants to histrionic fame. Provision might, at a small expense to each individual, be made for the widow and the orphan. Old age would be divested of the terrors of want. A restraining influence would be exercised on unscrupulousness. A systematic school of teaching would arise; and the stage would acquire that influence and position which, whatever they may be in the present, are to be in the future great." Thus, thirty years ago, Irving said all that there was to be said in regard to a National Theatre, which, despite recent discussion, seems as far from realisation as ever.

Apart from his other work while on tour in the autumn of 1878, he gave, at Edinburgh and Glasgow, two readings in aid of the sufferers by the failure of the City of Glasgow Bank. He was the first, by the way, to suggest a subscription on their behalf. He did so while addressing an enthusiastic crowd at the stage-door of the theatre in Greenock. The readings resulted in the addition of £730 to the fund. The desk and gas apparatus which he used on those occasions were the same as those used by Charles Dickens, whose family had presented them to the actor. At this time, also, his eminence was so great, that a professional visit to America was seriously mooted. Early in 1877, as already noted, he had received an alluring offer for a tour of the United States, and there were other offers from the same quarter in the autumn of 1878. Nor was it a particularly new experience for him to be misrepresented in this, as in other affairs. He had occasion to put himself right, and accordingly caused the following letter to the Press to be published:—

"SIR,—In your last issue you adverted to a letter which is supposed to have been written by me, and in which these sentences occur—'I am not foolish enough to consider my success certain among the American people, of whose tastes I know nothing. In England, I know what I am about.'

"This extract is a pure fabrication, and I will be glad if you will let me say so.

"Far from *not* wishing to visit America, I earnestly look forward to going there, for I love the country and have troops of friends in it.

"Yours very truly,
"HENRY IRVING.

"GLASGOW, 18*th November*, 1878."

By a curious coincidence, the announcement that "Mr. Tennyson is writing a play on the history of Thomas à Becket"—the character in which Irving won one of his greatest successes in America—was made just at the time that he wrote the above letter. This eventful year brought to Irving a loss which he felt keenly—the death, on 24th June, of his old and true friend, Charles James Mathews; and on 6th November there passed away the fine old actor, Samuel Phelps, from whom Irving, as a youth, had received his first offer of a theatrical engagement.

Incredible as it may appear to the impartial mind, there were prophets of evil in connection with the announcement of Henry Irving's management of the Lyceum. Actor-managers had never, or hardly ever, succeeded. So it was said, and with truth. Macready and Charles Kean had failed, and why should "the fashionable tragedian" succeed? There was the notable case, still fresh in the memory of the public, of Charles Mathews, "who never seemed able to do any good for himself except when he was under some one else's management, and this although the fare offered to the public was under both sets of circumstances the same. In no offensive sense of the words, it may be said that on the stage, as elsewhere, the good servant has frequently proved the bad master." This was from a journal the intentions of which were avowedly friendly to the actor. There was much more to the same purpose in other quarters. Misgivings were, indeed, general. The very fact that Irving, apart from his merit as an actor and his unbounded popularity, had proved himself an earnest student of his art and the greatest champion for the elevation of the stage that had ever lived, was against him in a commercial success. On the other hand, he had many doughty champions, and it was pointed out, some three months before he began his management of the Lyceum, that "the actor who conscientiously respects what he believes to be the intention of the author, who will spare no pains to determine the exact signification of a line or a passage, or a stage direction, and who makes himself acquainted with every available authority upon the subject with which he deals—this player surely shows that he has not a few of the qualities most to be desired in a manager whose efforts, as he himself states, are to be directed not only towards immediate results of pounds, shillings, and pence, but towards the future foundation of a School of Dramatic Art".

This latter allusion was founded on Irving's statement as to his intentions in a speech made on his benefit night at the Alexandra Theatre, Liverpool, in September. "At the termination of my present tour," he said, "my professional career in London will enter upon a new period, though without change of scene. When an actor turns manager, it is not with a greedy wish to monopolise either profits or opportunities. I, at least, most earnestly profess that it will be my aim at the Lyceum Theatre, of which I am now manager, to associate upon the stage all the arts and all the talents within my power to subsidise, so as to make the theatre a true school of dramatic art. I cannot myself pretend to be a master of any school; but I can say that most eminent members of my profession have joined me, and will help to make my theatre all I should wish it to be for the benefit of the public from whom I have received so much kindness." There was evidence in this address that the new manager did not intend to leave anything to chance. The most important of the "eminent members" of the profession who had elected to serve under his banner was Miss Ellen Terry, whose exquisite performance of Olivia at the Court Theatre in the previous April had drawn the attention of Henry Irving to the great charm of the actress and the possibilities of her future. The engagement was hailed with delight. Miss Terry was then in her thirty-first, the actor-manager in his forty-first, year.

As Miss Terry shared so largely in the artistic triumphs of Henry Irving's management—an association which lasted for over twenty-three years—it is necessary to note, as briefly as may be, her career prior to December, 1878. The child of players, she was born in Coventry, where her father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Terry, were under engagement, on 27th February, 1848. She is the second of four daughters, Miss Kate Terry (Mrs. Arthur Lewis) being the eldest, and Miss Marion Terry, the third daughter. The youngest sister, Miss Florence Terry, who died in 1896, was, as will be seen in due course, a member of the Lyceum company for several seasons. Ellen Alicia Terry—to give her full name—made her first appearance on the stage as a child actress at the Princess's Theatre, Oxford Street, then the home of Shakespearean drama. Charles Kean was the manager, and the first night—28th April, 1856—of his production of "The Winter's Tale" was honoured by the presence of Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, and the Princess Royal. So that the eight-year old impersonator of the boy, Mamillius, entered upon her public career under happy auspices. After "The Winter's Tale," which ran for over a hundred nights, there came, on 15th October, "A Midsummer-Night's Dream". "Miss Ellen Terry," wrote a contemporary critic, "played the merry goblin, Puck, a part that requires an old head on young shoulders, with restless, elfish animation, and an evident enjoyment of her own mischievous pranks". The

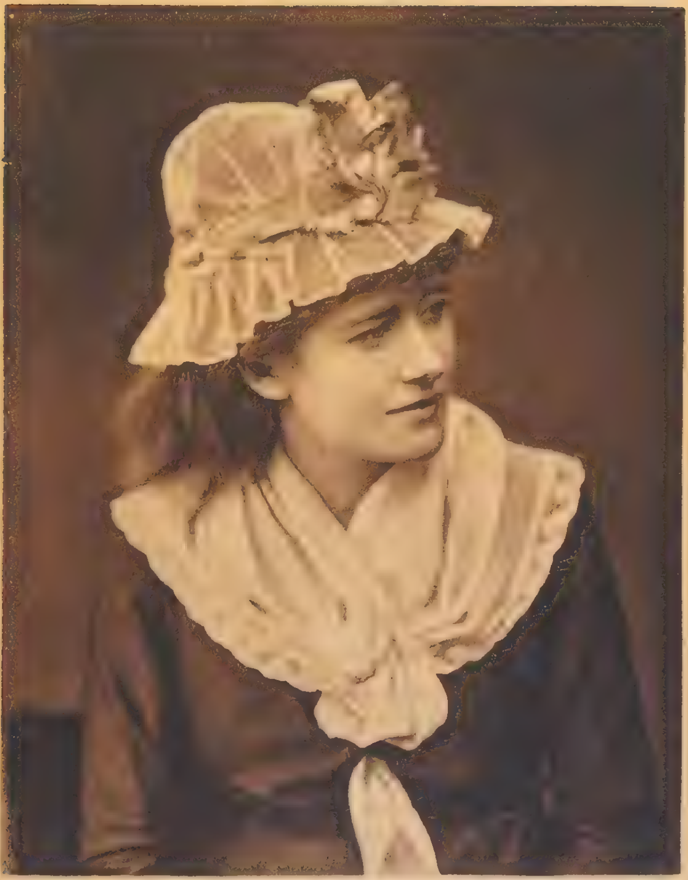

Photo: Lock and Whitfield, London.

Miss Ellen Terry in 1878.

child actress appeared in various other parts at the Princess's—sometimes playing two a night—and, on 5th April, 1858, she acted a boy, Karl, in a poor adaptation from the French, called "Faust and Marguerite". In another piece, a comedietta, she was again a boy, a "tiger". On 18th October, of the same year, she made a striking success as Prince Arthur in "King John". The Kean management terminated in 1859, and the Terry sisters, Kate and Ellen, were taken on tour, after an experimental trip at the Colosseum, Regent's Park—a building which Rogers, the poet, pronounced "finer than anything among the remains of architectural art in Italy"—in a drawing-room entertainment, the first part of which was called "Distant Relations," the second being entitled "Home for the Holidays". The little party, which included a pianist, in addition to Mr. and Mrs. Terry, toured for several months, the journeys being generally accomplished by coach or carriage. The young actress re-appeared in London in November, 1861, at the Royalty Theatre, in an adaptation of Eugene Sue's "Atar-Gull". From the Royalty, the juvenile actress went to the Theatre Royal, Bristol, a house which, under the management of J. H. Chute, possessed one of the finest stock companies in the country; and on 15th September, 1862, in an extravaganza called "Endymion," "made a Cupid who was his own apology for all the influence exerted". Miss Terry played other similar parts here, and, on 4th March, 1863, we find her at Bath, on the occasion of the opening of the new Theatre Royal, as the Spirit of the Future in the prologue, and as Titania in "A Midsummer-Night's Dream". During her engagements at Bristol and Bath she played many parts and gained valuable experience. Her reputation, also, was such that, child as she still was, the metropolis again claimed her.

The young actress returned to London under an engagement to support E. A. Sothern at the Haymarket Theatre. And, here, on 19th March, 1863—being then only just fifteen years of age—she acted the heroine in "The Little Treasure"

—a version of "La Joie de la Maison"—with such ingenuousness and sincerity that she was brought into particular prominence. A little later, she was a "graceful and winning" Hero in "Much Ado About Nothing". During her stay at the Haymarket, she also acted Lady Frances Touchwood in "The Belle's Stratagem," Julia in "The Rivals," and Mary Meredith in "Our American Cousin". At the Theatre Royal, Holborn, on 8th June, 1867, she was the heroine of a weird melodrama, called "The Antipodes, or the Ups and Downs of Life". At another vanished playhouse, the Queen's, in Long Acre, she acted, on 24th October in the same year, in Charles Reade's "Double Marriage," and, on 14th November, Mrs. Mildmay in "Still Waters Run Deep". On 26th December, "Katherine and Petruchio" was revived, the occasion being noticeable, as a matter of stage history, from the fact that, as stated in Chapter VI., Ellen Terry and Henry Irving acted together for the first time. Ellen Terry then retired from public life for six years. Her return to the stage was made at the Queen's Theatre on 28th February, 1874, in Reade's drama, "The Wandering Heir," a play founded on the Tichborne case. In April, the company gave a few performances at Astley's Amphitheatre, and here, in addition to the heroine of the "Wandering Heir," Miss Terry was seen as Susan in "It's Never too Late to Mend".

The period of probation was now over. Ellen Terry having, as a mere child, played many parts, and, as a still extremely youthful actress, having obtained invaluable experience of the stage, received an offer which resulted in her remarkable personality being brought into play with such effect that the seal of success was set upon the one great Shakespearean actress of the latter half of the nineteenth century. At the end of 1874, Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft, whose "little theatre in Tottenham Court Road," the old Prince of Wales's, the site of which is now covered by the stage of the Scala Theatre, was, thanks to the Robertsonian plays and their interpretation, synonymous with success, determined upon a revival of "The Merchant of Venice". The revival was on a most lavish scale, and the cast was chosen with extreme care and without regard to cost, but for all that, and for reasons which do not concern this history, it was a failure. The theatrical world, however, owes a debt of gratitude to the Bancrofts for giving to us, on the memorable night of 17th April, 1875, the enchanting Portia of Ellen Terry. The critics of that day exhausted themselves in her praise, and, in more recent years, this exquisite performance charmed countless thousands of playgoers in London, in the provinces, and throughout Canada and the United States of America. To return, however, to the Bancroft régime. "The Merchant of Venice" gave way, on 29th May, 1875, to "Money," in which Miss Terry, as Clara Douglas, made another remarkable success. This was followed, at a special matinée, on 19th June, by "A Happy Pair," with Miss Terry as Mrs. Honeyton. Her next great hit, however, was as Pauline in a single performance of "The Lady of Lyons," at the Princess's Theatre, on 7th August of the same year. Once more the critics exhausted themselves in eulogy. "Money" had a long run, and it was not until 6th November, 1875, that it was succeeded by "Masks and Faces," with Miss Terry as Mabel Vane. On 6th May, 1876, she acted her last part in the historic little playhouse off Tottenham Court Road —Blanche Haye, in a revival of "Ours". She then joined Mr. (now Sir) John Hare's company at the Court Theatre, and here she appeared, in November, 1876, in "Brothers," and, in December, in "New Men and Old Acres". In the latter piece, which was only put up as a stop-gap, but which, nevertheless, enjoyed a prolonged career, she made another step on the ladder of fame, despite the fact that there is not much opportunity for the actress in the character of Lilian Vavasour. On 1st March, 1877, Ellen Terry made her first appearance on the stage of Drury Lane, on which, curiously enough, she was not seen again until her Jubilee Commemoration, 12th June, 1906. The previous occasion was the benefit of Henry Compton, and she appeared as Georgina Vesey in "Money". Remaining at the Court

Theatre, she next played there, in October, 1877, in "The House of Darnley," a posthumous play by Lord Lytton, which, being a prompt failure, was succeeded in January, 1878, by "Victims," which was also unsuccessful, and in which she had a very poor part.

Then came, on 30th March, the dramatisation, by the late W. G. Wills, of "The Vicar of Wakefield," called "Olivia". The beauty of Miss Terry's impersonation was instantly recognised. "Olivia" ran throughout the season at the Court. During the summer, Miss Terry acted in the provinces, chiefly as Olivia. She also played two other parts —one in a little classical comedy, "The Cynic's Defeat," or "All is Vanity," the other, Dora, in Charles Reade's dramatisation of Tennyson's poem, a character which had been acted by Miss Kate Terry in the original production. On this tour, and on her tours of 1879 and 1880, her "leading man" was her husband, Charles Kelly (his real name was Wardell).

CHAPTER XVII.

30th December, 1878—August, 1879.

Henry Irving inaugurates his management of the Lyceum—The Preface to "Hamlet"—Letters to Frank Marshall—Some reminiscences—Irving's friends—His company and lieutenants—Monday, 30th December, 1878—A great night—Fees abolished—The theatre altered and redecorated—Enthusiasm of the audience and of the Press—Miss Ellen Terry's Ophelia—The Hamlet of 1878—The literary interest of the revival—"To produce the 'Hamlet' of to-night, I have worked all my life"—Benefit to an old actor—"The Lady of Lyons" revived—Other revivals—A remarkable proof of versatility—Irving's speech on the last night of the season—Opinions of French writers—Irving's fine hands—Courtesy to Sarah Bernhardt—More reminiscences—A well-won holiday.

It is important, as a matter of stage history, to observe that Miss Terry was, in 1878, only on the threshold of her glorious career. Her two chief successes, Portia and Olivia, had been achieved as the result, partly, of her youthful experience, but mainly by her temperament. Her girlish charm and the indescribable wistfulness of her manner at this period made her an ideal Olivia, and, as Irving well divined, she was the one actress whose talents fitted her for Ophelia. Consequently, she was admirably suited for the position of leading lady at the Lyceum—that is to say, for the young heroines of Shakespearean and other poetical dramas.

On the other hand, a matter of far greater importance to the proper view of the life-work of the great actor-manager of the Lyceum, Henry Irving's position on the stage was an assured one. His triumphs as Mathias, as Charles, as Eugene Aram, as Richelieu, as Richard III., as Lesurques and Dubosc, as Louis XI., had all been won. He had acted Macbeth and Othello. Above all, he had played Hamlet for two hundred consecutive nights—and to profitable business. His impersonation of Hamlet, and the unequalled number of consecutive performances attained by the tragedy in consequence, formed one of his proudest achievements. He always remembered this unique success. At various times in his career, he referred to it, and always with the same glowing, and justifiable, pride. Thus, for instance, in November, 1878, he wrote from Sheffield to his friend, Frank Marshall :—

"My dear Frank,—I want you to write a Preface—about seventy or eighty lines—for the edition of 'Hamlet' which I mean to publish for sale at the Lyceum. You know my views—they are yours. . . ."

HAMLET.

Revived at the Lyceum on the opening night of Henry Irving's management, 30th December, 1878.

Hamlet - - - - -	Mr. Henry Irving.
Claudius - - - - -	Mr. Forrester.
Polonius - - - - -	Mr. Chippendale.
Laertes - - - - -	Mr. F. Cooper.
Horatio - - - - -	Mr. T. Swinbourne.
Osric - - - - - -	Mr. Kyrle Bellew.
Rosencrantz - - - -	Mr. A. W. Pinero.
Guildenstern - - - -	Mr. Elwood.
Marcellus - - - - -	Mr. Gibson.
Bernardo - - - - -	Mr. Robinson.
Francisco - - - - -	Mr. Tapping.
Reynaldo - - - - -	Mr. Cartwright.
1st Player - - - - -	Mr. A. Beaumont.
2nd Player - - - - -	Mr. Everard.
Priest - - - - - -	Mr. Collett.
1st Gravedigger - - - -	Mr. S. Johnson.
2nd Gravedigger - - - -	Mr. A. Andrews.
Messenger - - - - -	Mr. Harwood.
Ghost of Hamlet's Father -	Mr. T. Mead.
Gertrude - - - - -	Miss Pauncefort.
Player Queen - - - -	Miss Sedley.
Ophelia - - - - -	Miss Ellen Terry.

In a second letter to Marshall he says :—

"Cannot it be put down that I played it at the Lyceum two hundred consecutive nights? I should like it to read—'It will be found, etc., production of the play at the Lyceum (30th October, 1878) when Mr. Irving played Hamlet for two hundred consecutive nights. The alterations have been made by him in accordance with the experience gained by frequent representations of the character of Hamlet.'"

And, in a third letter to Marshall concerning the Preface to his acting edition of 'Hamlet,' he re-iterates these views. Again, in 1896, an article appeared in one of the English magazines in which the writer made bold to settle the actor's "claims" once and for all. "It is pleasant to have one's 'claims' settled like that, monument, epitaph, and all," he said, when spoken to on the subject:—

"I recognised some affable, familiar ghosts in that article—the Lyceum scenery ghost, the National Theatre ghost, and the perturbed spirits of the original dramas I might produce and won't! . . . Except in one case, which I will deal with presently,[1] the scenic art has never been made the cardinal element of my policy. Let me inflict on you a piece of stage history. I became associated with the Lyceum twenty-five years ago. For the first seven or eight years, nothing was heard of this predominance of scenery. In the days of Mr. Bateman's management, we produced 'Hamlet,' which had the unprecedented run of two hundred nights, at a net profit of £10,000. The entire production cost about one hundred! Only two new scenes were painted. The churchyard, with a yew in it, was borrowed from 'Eugene Aram'; the dresses were hired. Obviously the success of those years was not due to lavish expenditure on decoration. When I became manager, my first Shakespeare play was 'The Merchant of Venice'. It was then that some of Mr.——'s ancestors became restive. They shook their heads at the scenery, and yet the total cost of that production was only £1200—a very small outlay on a picture of Venice."

Henry Irving began his management with many things in his favour. His position as an actor was already great and assured. Even those who disputed his ability as a player, admitted his intellectuality and his untiring advocacy of the rightful mission of the stage. His friends were many and powerful. Gladstone, Alfred Tennyson, and the late Baroness Burdett-Coutts were numbered among his staunch admirers. His indomitable will had asserted itself long before and had enabled him to triumph over difficulties which seemed, at first sight, insurmountable. He had two other qualities which stood out prominently and were of inestimable value, not only at this particular period, but throughout his career—a diplomacy which was based upon fine feeling and a keen knowledge of human nature, and an infinite capacity for taking pains. The company which he gathered together for his first season was the best that he could obtain for the purpose. Apart from Miss Ellen Terry, it included, among the generation of experienced actors, the veteran comedian, W. H. Chippendale, Thomas Swinbourne, Henry Forrester, and Miss Pauncefort. In the younger ranks were Mr. Kyrle Bellew, Mr. Frank Cooper, Mr. Arthur W. Pinero, the late Arthur Elwood, and Mr. Charles Cartwright. And, a sign of his unfailing remembrance of old friends, there was the comedian, Sam Johnson, an actor with whom he had played in Sunderland, twenty-two years previously. He retained the scenic artist, Mr. Hawes Craven, who had been associated with the Lyceum throughout the Bateman management, but, in place of Robert Stoepel, there was a new musical conductor in Mr. Hamilton Clarke. He also retained Mr. H. J. Loveday, who, as we have seen, had joined the Lyceum staff, as stage-manager, in January, 1877. Mr. Bram Stoker, at the solicitation of the actor-manager, gave up his position in the Dublin Civil Service, and became business manager for Henry Irving. Both the latter gentlemen retained their posts until the death of the actor in 1905—a tribute, not only to themselves, but to the loyalty of their chief.

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[1] This was his production, in 1892, of "Henry VIII." "In my judgment, 'Henry VIII.' is a pageant or nothing. Shakespeare, I am sure, had the same idea, and it was in trying to carry it out that he burned down the Globe Theatre by letting off a cannon!—H. I."

The name of Henry Irving as "sole lessee and manager" of the Royal Lyceum Theatre was seen on the programme for the first time on Monday, 30th December, 1878. There were many points of interest for the spectators to note before the beginning of the performance. The audience itself was exceptionally interesting. Literature, art, the learned professions, rank and fashion were well represented in the stalls and private boxes. The pit and the gallery were filled to repletion. Indeed, the approaches to the unreserved portion of the theatre had been occupied for hours before the opening of the doors. "For such a spectacle as the house presented," said a contemporary writer, "we have no precedent in England: the great players of the past could rely for ardent support upon only one section of their audience; Mr. Irving seems to be popular with all classes. In the West-end, it has become the fashion to see him in every character he undertakes; the enthusiasm he excites among the great mass of playgoers is indisputable." The printed programme was in itself an augury of good taste for, instead of the old-fashioned, common sheet, printed in heavy type and black ink, there was a neat sheet of buff paper, printed in a light chocolate ink which did not spoil the gloves or dirty the hands, the form of which was retained at the Lyceum for over twenty years. Moreover, it bore the following conspicuous announcement:—

"The Bill of the Play will in every part of the House be supplied without charge.

"No Fees of any kind will be permitted, and Mr. Irving trusts that in his endeavour to carry out this arrangement he may rely on the co-operation of the Public."

Thus, at one fell swoop, he abolished payment for programmes and charges for the use of the cloak-rooms. He rigidly adhered to this innovation throughout the period of his management. Again, he had called in the assistance of an old friend in Manchester—the Polonius to his youthful Hamlet—Mr. Alfred Darbyshire, by this time a well-known architect, with whose help he carried out many alterations in the structure and decoration of the theatre. The general scheme of decoration was sage green and turquoise blue. Comfortable stalls were provided, backs and rails were put to the seats in pit and gallery, and other minor improvements were effected. Formerly of a dingy aspect, the interior of the Lyceum was now exceedingly pleasing to the eye, not the least of its attractions being a new and graceful act-drop. "I need not enter into the details of my work at the Lyceum Theatre, done for my friend and to the satisfaction of the Lord Chamberlain and Mr. Arnold, the owner. Suffice it to say that the works were of much importance, and that nothing of historic or art value was injured or destroyed. The Bartolozzi ornaments on the circle fronts were maintained with that respect due to the work of a great artist, who was the father of Madame Vestris, once the lessee of the theatre. I recollect on one occasion, during the carrying out of the decorative work, the venerable Walter Lacy was present when the ceiling of the auditorium was being stripped prior to the new scheme of decoration. The process revealed a scheme of ornament in imitation of lace work on a pink coloured ground. On showing a piece of this to the good old actor he exclaimed : 'This is a portion of the work done to please Madame Vestris! Why! my boy, the whole place was hung with imitation lace; it was a fairylike oriental ecstacy! The figure groups and raised ornaments were modelled by Bartolozzi.'"[1]

Apart from the brilliant assemblage of notabilities on this historic evening, there was one feature which possessed the same characteristic which distinguished the actor throughout his career, especially in its closing years—his attraction for the youth, of both sexes, of the country. The crowds of young people which he drew to Drury Lane during his last season in London are still fresh in the remembrance. He had just the same influence in 1878, for, when he initiated his management on 30th December with "Hamlet," the popular portions of the theatre were filled with an assemblage of "intelligent high-spirited youth, whose presence showed how profound an influence the theatre is calculated to exercise over the future of a nation, while their behaviour proved the sincerity of their convictions that in Mr. Irving they had found the realisation of their ideal. Such enthusiasm and such faith should almost make an actor. He must be less than man who in presence of such manifestations as were last night heard did not feel his soul stirred to a resolution to merit such appreciation and trust. There was an absolute frenzy of rage when any one during a performance, the pauses in which were the shortest, took his seat late, or in any other manner made a noise that interfered with the power of hearing what was spoken ; and it was easy to imagine that any one creating purposely a disturbance would have had an ill time of it. Not less impressive than the stillness of the audience in the moments of passionate interest was the outburst when the whole of the occupants of the house rose and shouted their approval and admiration. The influence was irresistible and electrical. Whatever may be the feeling of the spectator as to the exposition that is afforded, it can scarcely be maintained by any that this tribute was undeserved. For the first time the same kind of intellectual care has been bestowed upon the mounting of a dramatic masterpiece that has previously been reserved for the domestic comedy of English life, or the imported comedy of French manners. We have in Mr. Irving a man who, besides supplying a thoughtful and elaborate interpretation of the highest character, extends over an entire play the kind of care we are thankful to find attendant upon a single rôle. We feel throughout every vibration of the huge machine that the hand of the master is upon the lever, and that every movement is directed by one responsible and powerful will. From first to last, accordingly, the performance is integral. It may be wrong or right, it is at least whole. Scenery, decorations, dresses, everything in fact in connection with the play is arranged with a view to producing a symmetrical result. For the first time we have a Shakespearean play given with ensemble. The gain thus afforded cannot be overestimated. It amounts, so far as Shakespeare is concerned, to revelation."

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[1] Alfred Darbyshire in "The Art of the Victorian Stage," 1906.

There were many similar tributes in the newspaper press of the day to that just quoted—from the *Globe*—and the eminent position which had already been achieved by Henry Irving was admitted on all sides. Nor were these tributes confined to those who were either his personal friends or the most sympathetic towards his aspirations. Many pages could be filled with the praise which was lavished upon him by impartial observers, but the best proof of his position as the leader of his profession and of his unexampled popularity is, perhaps, to be found in the recognition which he at last exacted from his two old opponents—Dutton Cook and Joseph Knight. Both these critics were gentlemen, and expressed themselves as such. That is to say, their writing was not on the same level as that of the men who only sought to vilify the actor—and most of whom, by the way, had been silenced, by now, through the force of public opinion. Dutton Cook and Joseph Knight could not have been blackguardly in their criticism, had they tried. But they were severe on occasion, and Henry Irving received considerable chastening from them in his earlier years. He, no doubt, profited by their strictures, and, that he bore no malice was amply demonstrated towards one of them—as will be shown hereafter—a few months before his death. It is only necessary to take one brief excerpt from each writer. Dutton Cook began his notice with the statement that: "Mr. Irving's managerial career has commenced most auspiciously. The opening representation was, indeed, from first to last simply triumphant. A distinguished audience filled to overflowing the redecorated Lyceum Theatre, and the new impresario was received with unbounded enthusiasm. These gratifying evidences of good-will were scarcely required, however, to convince Mr. Irving that his enterprise carried with it very general sympathy. His proved devotion to his art, his determination to uphold the national drama to its utmost, have secured for him the suffrages of all classes of society. And it is recognised that he has become a manager, not to enhance his position as an actor—for already he stands in the front rank of his profession—but the better to promote the interests of the whole stage, and to serve more fully, to gratify more absolutely the public, his patrons."

Mr. Knight's recognition of an obvious state of affairs was couched in somewhat warmer language: "Mr. Irving received such manifestations of delight and approval as recall the most brilliant triumphs of the tragedians of past time. It is impossible to doubt the sincerity of the convictions that found expression in ringing cheers and shouts of affectionate welcome. No amount of care or expense could have organised a demonstration of the kind; nothing short of spontaneous and overmastering enthusiasm could have produced it. The most severely critical estimate of Mr. Irving's powers does not involve any scepticism as to the value of a demonstration like this. While successive governments, with a timidity and mistrust of the people which speak little for their intelligence, leave all questions of literature and art to look after themselves, the public recognises a debt of gratitude to those who endeavour by private action to make up for national shortcomings. To present a Shakespearean masterpiece under favourable conditions, with an adequate cast and artistic surroundings, is a work of no small difficulty or importance. In saying, as he did, in a short address to the public after the performance, that the dream of his life had been to do this, Mr. Irving obtained implicit credence. It has, indeed, required years of preparation to bring about the result. As some motive of personal ambition is sure to colour most private effort, it was necessary for the actor to win acceptance for his own conception of Hamlet or some other leading Shakespearean character. This in itself means delaying an experiment until the top of an arduous profession is reached. A theatre has then to be obtained, and actors, seldom too amenable to discipline, have to be drilled until they become one harmonious whole. This triumph Mr. Irving has obtained. The representation of 'Hamlet' supplied on Monday night is the best the stage, during the last quarter of a century, has seen, and it is the best also that is likely, under existing conditions, to be seen for some time to come. Scenic accessories are explanatory without being cumbersome, the costumes are picturesque and striking and show no needless affectation of archæological accuracy; and the interpretation has an ensemble rarely found in any performance, and never, during recent years, in a representation of tragedy."

Here was high praise indeed. Mr. Knight, as did Mr. Cook, devoted a long essay to the discussion of Irving's interpretation of Hamlet and the general representation of the tragedy. Both critics admired Miss Terry's exquisite rendering of Ophelia, and gave her all credit for her beautiful performance. But, in each case, the critic evidently thought that a few lines—six in one, and a dozen in the other—sufficient recognition of the young actress. Another critic, who had the advantage of seeing the representation after the first night—when "her mad scene was robbed of much of its effect by a slight hoarseness and want of self-possession"—considered her Ophelia "a poem in action. Her change of countenance at the first allusion in her presence to Hamlet; her placing her hand upon her brother's shoulder as though to add weight to the counsel given to him by Polonius; her lingering look at the presents as she returned them to the giver; the silent anguish in which she parted from the cherished day-dream of her youth—all this may be classed with those May-fly glories of the stage which can hardly be perpetuated by literary skill." The *Saturday Review*, among other journals, gave a detailed account of Miss Terry's impersonation, and found much reason for commendation, not only of her conception of the part, but for a rendering "so perfect that every word seems to be spoken, every gesture to be made, from the emotion of the moment, on the importance of which we have already insisted. The pathos of the mad scene is not more thought out or more natural than the emotion shown in the scene where Polonius dismisses Laertes to his ship, a scene of which Miss Terry relieves the possible tedium by exhibiting, during Polonius's speech, the interest which a sister would naturally feel in her brother's prospects. Miss Terry's performance begins by striking a note of nature, and is natural and complete throughout, with one exception. Throughout, one is impressed by the consistency of the actress's conception, and by the perfect expression given to her idea. These qualities are especially remarkable in the mad scene. Here, instead of the incoherent outpouring of imbecile unconnected phrases which has too often passed for Shakespeare's representation of Ophelia's madness, Miss Terry shows us an intelligible, and (if one may use a seemingly paradoxical term) consistent state of dementia. That is, her power of facial expression, her action, and her intonation, combine to show us the origin in her disordered state of mind of each wild and whirling word that she utters. Every broken phrase and strange image is suggested by some recollection of the time before she was distraught. The intense pathos with which this catching up of interrupted threads of thought is presented it is impossible to describe, except in the words of Laertes :—

> Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself,
> She turns to favour and to prettiness.

The exception referred to above occurs in the scene where Ophelia returns Hamlet's presents. Here Miss Terry is too much given to tears, too little to amazement. But this is a very small blemish, if it is a blemish, in a performance full of beauty."

The Hamlet of 1878 was substantially that of 1874—a little more elaborate, a little more human—if that were possible —but, its most marked change, more tender in its treatment of Ophelia. Irving's Hamlet was that of the prince and lover, as well as the courtier, soldier, and scholar. "Though he resolutely blots out from his life as a 'trivial, fond record' that fond love for Ophelia which has been his solace and stay in the midst of doubt and fear, he can only do so when he is out of her presence. In spite of his affected cynicism, he loves her to distraction, and when he bids her depart to a nunnery, his passion speaks in his every gesture and through his every word. It is impossible to dwell on the abundant details of which the performance is made up. We can only say that it is strongest in the scenes in his mother's closet, most imaginative in those immediately succeeding the play scene, most tender in the interview with Ophelia, most thoughtful in the conversation with the gravediggers, Many points of departure, so far as regards matters of detail, from the previous representation were noticeable. None of these, however, greatly affected the scope of the entire conception. Mr. Irving's rendering was watched with painful attention and no point in it escaped approval, or indeed failed to elicit enthusiasm."[1]

"The all-round excellence of the representation was freely recognised, the performance being compared, in this respect, to the leading feature of the subsidised theatres of the Continent. And the revival had a literary interest, for the Lyceum version—the work of the actor-manager—differed from any previous stage-versions, in many respects. Fortinbras, as usual, did not appear, and in the first scene, the ghost made its appearance, not in a 'front' scene of meagre proportions, but in the battlements of the castle. The old stage direction that the 'perturbed spirit' should make the revelation on 'another part of the platform' was probably due to the absence of scenery from Elizabethan theatres. At the Lyceum, the revelation was made in a lonely spot at some distance from the castle. This change is in strict accordance with the text; Hamlet follows the ghost from midnight until the approach of dawn, and his words, 'I'll go no further,' joined to the difficulty experienced by Horatio and Marcellus in finding him, suggest—unless, indeed, the scene occurs at a time of year when the interval between midnight and daybreak is very short—that a considerable distance has been traversed. Consequently, the revelation is made with greater effect in a deserted spot than within earshot of the revelry which is taking place in the castle. The quaint apostrophes to the ghost—'Art thou there, old truepenny?' and 'Well said, old mole'—were wisely restored at the Lyceum, for they show both the unhinged state of Hamlet's mind and his anxiety to mislead his friends as to the true state of the supernatural vision. The closet scene was enacted in a room adjoining the Queen's bedchamber, and the ghost passed through the door of the latter as if to enforce the behest—

> Let not the Royal bed of Denmark, etc.

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[1] The *Globe*, 31st December, 1878.

The Lyceum ghost appeared in a sort of robe, instead of the armour usual on the stage—an alteration justified by a direction in the first quarto of the play—'Enter the ghost in his night gowne'—and by Hamlet's exclamation—

> My father, in his habit as he lived!

In the last act, Ophelia was buried at nightfall; first, because that used to be the custom in the case of suicide, and, secondly, because of Hamlet's allusion to the 'wandering stars'. From two lines in the quarto of 1603, it is clear that Shakespeare intended the events of the fifth act to take place in one day. These lines, however, are omitted from all subsequent editions, and it is evident that the after-intention of the author was to allow a night to elapse between the burial of Ophelia and the fencing-match. Is it likely, as was pointed out by F. A. Marshall in the Preface which he had been commissioned to write for the Lyceum acting-version, that such a match would have been proceeded with on the day of interment? The scene between Hamlet and Osric had hitherto been played in a 'hall'. At the Lyceum, it was enacted 'outside the castle,' and the line—

> Put your bonnet to the right use; 'tis for the head

was no longer felt as being inappropriate. In saying, 'I will walk here, in the hall,' Hamlet may have indicated the castle by a gesture. The change also had the advantage of giving variety to the final scene, which was laid in a hall, through some arches of which—at the back—were seen a lawn and the orchard in which Hamlet's father had been poisoned. Objection was made to this change, inasmuch as Hamlet's injunction, 'Let the door be locked,' is rendered unintelligible, but, on the other hand, the idea of having the punishment of the murderer meted out to him within sight of the scene of his crime was singularly happy.

"The intelligent manner in which the tragedy was produced, in regard to its stage-management and its decoration, received high praise in all quarters. In regard to costume, the task was attended with considerable difficulty. Hamlet, it may be presumed, lived in the fifth or sixth century. Yet the story is treated by the dramatist as one of the Elizabethan age and with a fine disregard for local colouring or historical accuracy. The personages in the play talk and think in an Elizabethan style; Hamlet himself is an incarnation of the intellectual agitation to which the Reformation gave rise, and cannon and other instruments of modern warfare are alluded to. The Danish costume of the dark ages was far from picturesque, and the adoption for this revival of dresses of a sixteenth century character was the wiser of two courses. These costumes, it need hardly be said, were in good taste and agreeable contrast. The scenery, without being pretentious, marked a distinct advance in the decoration of the stage. Two scenes were especially beautiful. The first was that in which the ghost makes the revelation to Hamlet. The Prince of Denmark has followed the spirit of his father to

> The dreadful summit of the cliff,
> That beetles o'er his base into the sea.

Standing among a number of massive rocks, the ghost proceeds with the supernatural impartment. The soft light of the moon falls upon the spectral figure; not a sound from below can be heard; the first faint flashes of the dawn are stealing over the immense expanse of water before us. The weird grandeur of the scene can hardly be appreciated from description. Equally striking in its way is that of the burial of Ophelia. The churchyard is on a hill near the palace, and, as night comes on, the funeral procession winds slowly up the ascent. Never before have the 'maimèd rites' been so exactly and impressively performed. The scene in the battlements at Elsinore, with the illuminated windows of the palace in the background, and the star alluded to by Bernardo glistening in the northern sky, is also very satisfactory."[1] Mr. Marshall, in his Preface, claimed for Henry Irving that, "without attempting to overburden the play with spectacular

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[1] The *Theatre*, February, 1879.

From the picture by Edward H. Bell.

HENRY IRVING AS HAMLET.
MISS ELLEN TERRY AS OPHELIA.
1879.

effect, and to smother the poet under a mass of decoration," he had "endeavoured to obtain as much assistance from the scene-painter's art as the poet's own description may seem to justify". It was generally admitted that this object had been attained at the Lyceum: the scenery, like every other accessory, aiding the imagination, instead of disturbing it.

On the first night of the revival, the new actor-manager, in response to what was described in the Press of the following day as "the most enthusiastic summons ever probably accorded to an actor," spoke a few words to the audience. "I cannot allow this event to pass," he said, "without telling you how much I thank you for the way in which you have received our efforts. As long as I am lessee here, rest assured I shall do my utmost for the elevation of my art, and to increase your comfort. In the name of one and all concerned in the production of this piece, I thank you from my soul. To produce the 'Hamlet' of to-night I have worked all my life; and I rejoice to think that my work has not been in vain. You have attested in a way that goes quickest to the actor's heart that you have been satisfied. When the heart is full, the weakness of man's nature manifests itself, and I feel now like a child."[1] That the revival was successful in a popular, as well as in an artistic sense, goes without saying. One hundred and eight representations were given throughout the season, and of these eighty-eight were consecutive.

During the run of "Hamlet," two interesting events occurred. One of these was the sudden closing of Drury Lane Theatre early in February. The pantomime at that house depended, for several seasons, very largely, if not entirely, on the popularity of a famous troupe of pantomimists and dancers—the Vokes Family. One of the most favourite members of the little company, Miss Rosina Vokes, had lately retired from the troupe, and it was thought, doubtless with some foundation of fact, that the public had "tired of seeing Mr. Fred Vokes throw his legs at the heads of his sisters, Victoria and Jessie". This was true, to a certain extent, but the real reason for the disastrous failure was due to causes unconnected with the pantomime of "Cinderella". In October, F. B. Chatterton—the manager who had pronounced the famous dictum that "Shakespeare spells ruin"—had re-opened Old Drury with "The Winter's Tale". The play was elaborately, but not artistically, mounted, and the performance generally was "deficient in histrionic aptitude and intellectuality". The sequel was found in the sudden closing of the theatre, "to the surprise of most of the members of the company and to the dismay of all" when the pantomime, in the ordinary course of events, would have had at least three more weeks to run. This premature closing was followed by the petition of the lessee and manager for the liquidation of his affairs, the amount of his debts being roughly estimated at £40,000, as against assets which were practically nil consisting as they did chiefly, if not entirely, of copyright dramatic manuscripts. This failure, the primary cause of which was the unpopularity of "The Winter's Tale," was not very encouraging to a manager who relied very largely on Shakespeare for his attraction. Still, it was a lesson by which he profited.

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[1] "Do Richard the Second," shouted someone in the pit while this speech was being made. Oddly enough, Irving never produced "Richard II." although, as will be seen hereafter, he had it in preparation for production at the Lyceum.

The other event was of a more gratifying nature. The night of 24th February was set aside for the benefit and last appearance at the Lyceum of W. H. Chippendale, the Polonius of the cast, an admirable actor of "old men". Indeed, he seemed expressly destined to represent the old gentlemen of comedy of the eighteenth century plays, and for many years he divided the honours of Sir Peter Teazle with Samuel Phelps. He could also grasp the nicest shades of character in Shakespearean comedy: his Adam in "As You Like It" was an artistic and touching performance. He was originally employed in the office of the famous printer, James Ballantyne; Walter Scott, who knew his father well, would pat him on the head and call him "a chip of the old block". He went on the stage in 1819, and, after a lucrative tour in

America, appeared at the Haymarket in 1853. When he took his farewell of the public at the Lyceum, the programme stated that "The entire receipts will be given to Mr. Chippendale, who, after a career of sixty-eight years upon the stage, will on this occasion bid good-bye to the public he has so faithfully served. The Ladies and Gentlemen of the Dramatic Company of the Lyceum have on this occasion one and all gracefully tendered their services". The proceeds of the performance, amounting to nearly £300, were presented to him without any deduction—"a princely, and, I believe, unprecedented gift," said the veteran player in his address to the audience, "from a young actor to an old one, and enhanced in value by the delicate and graceful manner in which the whole thing has been managed by him". Another announcement made at this time is somewhat curious reading—"Mr. Tennyson has written for the Lyceum a new play in five acts, and in verse, entitled 'Eleanor and Rosamond'." Twenty-four years were to pass before Henry Irving produced this play. It is curious to reflect that he had the character of Becket, in which he may be said to have died, in his mind for all those years.

Irving's next excursion took him into the artificial land of "The Lady of Lyons"—a managerial mistake which can only be attributed to the fact that he had played Claude Melnotte before and wished to do so again. For this drama is opposed to all natural acting. Unless it is played in bombastic style, it has no attraction. Besides, its sentiment is very unreal, not to say mawkish. However, Macready was a good precedent. Accordingly, on 17th April, Lytton's play was presented at the Lyceum. For a description of its reception, we may take the evidence of the *Daily Telegraph:* "No applause could have been more vigorous, and no outward marks of appreciation more complimentary. When it became known to those well-trained in the observation of such matters, that the old play had won a gorgeously decorated frame, but had not lost its spirit and buoyancy, the cheers came down with redoubled vigour, the principal actors were called again and again, twice or three times the curtain was drawn up at the bidding of the public, and the evening was not allowed to close without one of those speeches wrung from a favourite actor, as an answer to so cordial an expression of friendliness and kind feeling. There was no need for Mr. Irving to apologise for any shortcomings on the part of the management, or any feeble efforts or mistakes incidental to a first representation, for probably—nay, certainly—the playgoers of our time have never seen 'The Lady of Lyons' placed before them with such scrupulous care and exactness in the smallest detail. Even those who are unaffectedly weary of the old-fashioned sentiment of the play, and are bold enough to have formed a very decided opinion on the characteristic of Claude and the pride of Pauline, can gaze contentedly at faultless pictures, at costume raised to the dignity of an art, if occasionally astonishing in its accuracy,

THE LADY OF LYONS.

Revived at the Lyceum, 17th April, 1879.

CLAUDE MELNOTTE - - -	MR. IRVING.
COLONEL DAMAS - - - -	MR. WALTER LACY.
BEAUSEANT - - - - -	MR. FORRESTER.
GLAVIS - - - - - -	MR. KYRLE BELLEW.
MONSIEUR DESCHAPPELLES - -	MR. C. COOPER.
LANDLORD - - - - -	MR. S. JOHNSON.
GASPAR - - - - - -	MR. TYARS.
CAPTAIN GERVAISE - - -	MR. ELWOOD.
CAPTAIN DUPONT - - - -	MR. CARTWRIGHT.
MAJOR DESMOULINS - - -	MR. ANDREWS.
NOTARY - - - - - -	MR. TAPPING.
SERVANT - - - - - -	MR. BRANSCOMBE.
SERVANT - - - - - -	MR. HOLLAND.
MADAME DESCHAPPELLES - -	MRS. CHIPPENDALE.
WIDOW MELNOTTE - - -	MISS PAUNCEFORT.
JANET - - - - - -	MISS MAY SEDLEY.
MARIAN - - - - - -	MISS HARWOOD.
PAULINE - - - - - -	MISS ELLEN TERRY.

ACT I., SCENE 1. A room in the house of M. Deschappelles; SCENE 2. The exterior of "The Golden Lion"; SCENE 3. The interior of Melnotte's Cottage. ACT II., SCENE. The Gardens of M. Deschappelles. ACT III., SCENE 1. The exterior of "The Golden Lion"; SCENE 2. The interior of Melnotte's Cottage. ACT IV., SCENE. The cottage as before. ACT V. (Two and a half years are supposed to have elapsed.) SCENE 1. A street in Lyons; SCENE 2. A room in the house of M. Deschappelles.

and at innumerable graces of arrangement and movement, which please the eye when the ear is out of tune with the passion."

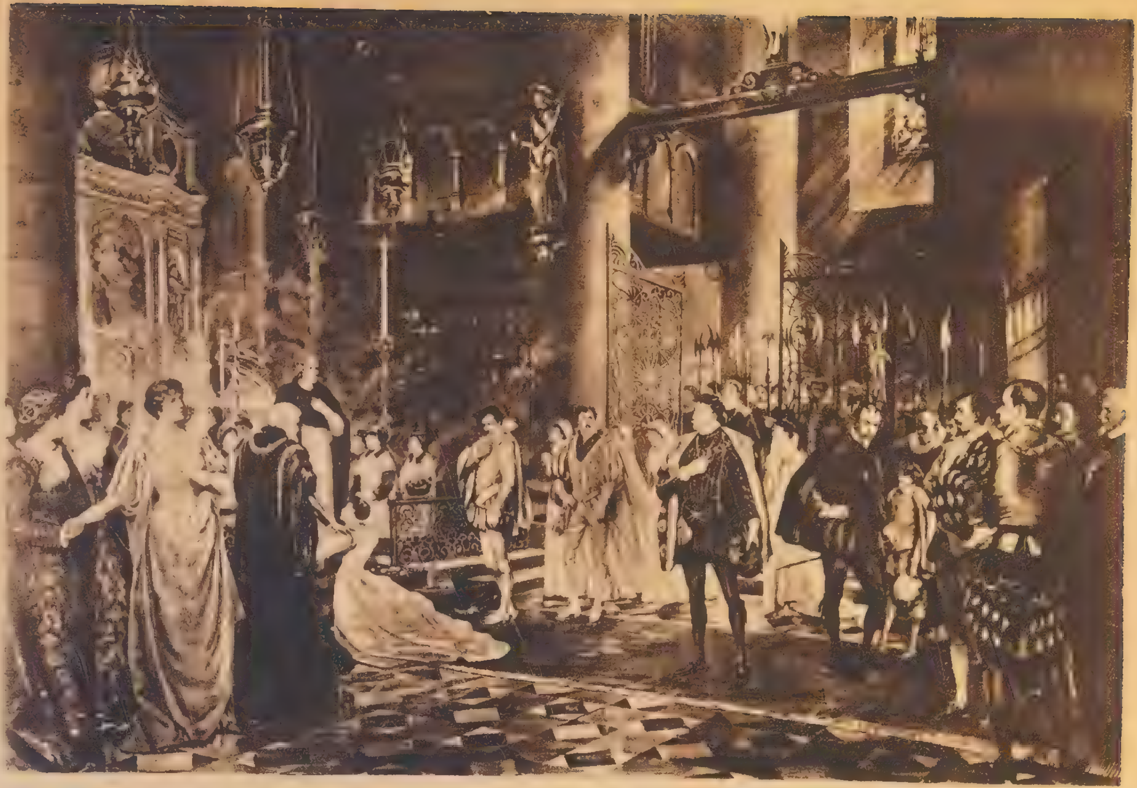
The same paper analysed the acting at length, and asked "Where, then, was the pride of the new Pauline, where were her indignation, her remorse, and her scorn? They were not there, and, apparently, they were not wanted. Fascinated by the picturesque appearance of the actress, and watching her power of assimilating herself to the decoration of the scene, the audience was content to accept for the proud Pauline, a tender, tearful, and sympathetic lady, who has no heart to rail, and no strength to curse. . . . The tenderly fragile, the constantly fainting, and tearfully pathetic Pauline of Miss Ellen Terry will not surprise more than the deeply tragic, absorbed, and highly nervous Claude Melnotte of Mr. Henry Irving. He brings to bear all the weight of his intelligence, his reflection, and the depth of his earnestness upon a character that is directly antagonistic to the sombreness of his manner and to the accepted peculiarities of his style. If the Pauline of Miss Ellen Terry is overcharged with fantastic sentiment, the Claude of Mr. Irving is overwhelmed with an abiding sorrow." It required, indeed, high moral courage on the part of the actor to appear as Claude Melnotte at this stage of his career. From a theatrical point of view, the character of the gardener's son is inferior to that of the woman upon whom he imposes, especially when Pauline is presented by an actress of rare gifts and the charm of youth. The part was unsuited, in every way, to Henry Irving. "The Lady of Lyons" was played for forty-one nights, and, during the last two months of the season, four additional performances were given. After June, 1879, it was a closed book to Henry Irving.

These months were devoted to a series of interesting revivals—"Louis XI," "Hamlet," "Charles the First," "The Lady of Lyons," "The Lyons Mail," "The Bells," "Eugene Aram," and "Richelieu," in the order named. On 25th July, the last night but one of the season, Irving gave a remarkable proof of his versatility by acting six characters of great divergence—Richard III. in the first act of the tragedy; Richelieu, in the fourth act of the play; Charles the First, in the last act; Louis XI. in the third act; Hamlet, in the third act; and Jeremy Diddler, in "Raising the Wind". Such an occasion, of course, could not be allowed to pass without a speech. The demand was, on this occasion, eminently fit and proper, for Irving had now completed the first seven months of his management of the Lyceum, and the occasion was one of unusual interest to the audience. The speech is interesting to look back upon, for it includes mention of the preparations for one Shakespearean piece which he did not produce until twenty-three years later and of one play which he never acted. He said:—

"I cannot resist the temptation of saying a few words to you to-night, for when last I had the honour of speaking to you at the commencement of my management, your sympathy and generous approval gave me vast hopes—which hopes have been almost realised, for at the close of my first season I can tell you of an achieved and distinct success. The friendship, Ladies and Gentlemen, which exists between us, and which I have the inestimable privilege of enjoying, is not a thing of to-day, or yesterday, or a year ago. For nearly eight years we have met in this theatre, and the eloquence of your faces and of your applause has thrilled me again and again. You will not, therefore, I am sure, consider it as springing from any vain feeling on my part, when I tell you the receipts of this theatre during the past seven months. We have taken at the doors, since we opened on the 30th December, the large sum of £36,000. I can give you no better proof than this of your generous appreciation of our work. To-night I have chosen to appear before you not in one character, but in six, for each part has been associated with so much pleasure, so many kindly wishes from you, and such sympathetic recognition, that I wished, before taking my first real holiday for a long time, to renew in one night some of the memories of many. I should like to have played half a dozen other characters, but was warned that five hours would tax even your patience, so I reluctantly consented to the short programme I have set before you. My next season, Ladies and Gentlemen, if all be well, will be a longer one than the past has been. To stay amongst you I have forgone all engagements out of London, and I intend to begin again here on Saturday, 20th of September, eight weeks from to-morrow. I shall try my utmost to continue in your favour, and I have such belief in your judgment that I feel the way to get and keep that favour is to deserve it. The germ of the future we should seek in the past, and I mean that the future of my management shall profit by the experience I have lately gained. The lesson that I have learned is that frequent change in a theatre is a desirable element—an element gratefully accepted by the public, and perhaps even more gratefully by the actors; and during the coming time I shall endeavour to put before you such pieces as I believe you desire, and which will give you pleasure. For a week or two after our opening we shall play 'Hamlet' once during the week, and that will be continued as long as you come to see it. That this is not a rash resolve you will believe when I tell you that during the past seven months we have acted 'Hamlet' one hundred and eight times, and each time to an overflowing house. During the first week of my campaign, I shall present to you Colman's play of 'The Iron Chest,' in which I shall have the temerity to attempt a celebrated character of Edmund Kean's—Sir Edward Mortimer. This drama I shall produce with much of the old music, and I shall try to show you what our forefathers delighted in. With this play I shall occasionally revive some of your old favourites, and so give time for the preparation of one of our master's master-plays—'Coriolanus' —in the production of which I shall have the invaluable benefit of the research of that gifted painter, Mr. Alma Tadema. Of other kinds of work, I have a store, and two original plays ready, one of which has already excited much interest—I mean Mr. Frank Marshall's drama founded on the romantic and pathetic story of Robert Emmet. And so, Ladies and Gentlemen, I trust that next season our boat will 'sail freely both with wind and stream'. I am reluctant to leave you, for almost my happiest hours are spent in your company, but as I have still to 'raise the wind' to-night, I must bring these parting words to an end. In the names of one and all behind our curtain I thank you for your past kindness, and in eight weeks' time, when we meet again, I hope you will see me once more sustained by new hopes and old remembrances."

It may be observed that Miss Ellen Terry acted, during her first engagement at the Lyceum, in addition to Ophelia and Pauline, Lady Anne, Ruth Meadows (in "Eugene Aram"), and the Queen in "Charles the First". "The Lady of Lyons," by the way, was preceded by the old farce, "High Life Below Stairs," in which Mr. Kyrle Bellew, Mr. Pinero, and Miss Alma Murray played. The latter actress made her first appearance at the Lyceum on 13th June, as Julie to Irving's Richelieu, and created a most favourable impression. The season terminated on 26th July, "Eugene Aram" and "Raising the Wind" constituting the bill. The receipts for the last night were £396 8s. 10d. The sale of the books of the Lyceum version of "Hamlet" brought in £307 7s. and the performances were witnessed by 204,334 people. "Hamlet" was seen twice, in January, by Mr. Gladstone.

In addition to the Chippendale testimonial performance, there were two matinées of exceptional interest, apart from the regular programme, during the first season of Henry Irving's management. On 29th May, a benefit was given to Henry Marston (1804-1883), a valued actor of the old days, who had fallen into ill-health in his declining years. The proceedings opened with a "classical comedietta" entitled "All is Vanity," an adaptation by Alfred Thompson from "La Revanche d'Iris," originally produced at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, Liverpool, in the summer of 1878, with Miss Ellen Terry as Iris and Mr. Charles Kelly, her husband, as Diogenes. Miss Terry and Mr. Kelly resumed these



From the picture by J. Forbes Robertson.

"Much Ado about Nothing" at the Lyceum. Act IV.

parts at the Lyceum. "Much Ado About Nothing," with Mr. W. H. Kendal as Benedick, Miss Henrietta Hodson as Beatrice, Mr. Edward Terry as Dogberry, and other well-known actors in the cast, was given. Another interesting morning performance—for a hospital charity—which was given on 24th June, introduced the second act of Robertson's comedy, "Ours," to the Lyceum stage, interpreted by Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft (as they then were), the late Arthur Cecil, the late John Clayton, Mr. H. B. Conway, the late Miss Le Thière, and the late Amy Roselle. The second and fourth acts of "Charles the First," with Irving as Charles and Miss Ellen Terry as the Queen, were given, and the performance concluded with "Cox and Box," conducted by the composer, Arthur Sullivan. Arthur Cecil was the Box, Corney Grain the Sergeant Bouncer, and Mr. George Grossmith—now the Elder, then the Younger—the Cox. "Cox and Box," by the way, has an intimate association with the Lyceum stage inasmuch as the original "Box and Cox" was produced there on 1st November, 1847. The farce was adapted from the French—"Frisette" and "La Chambre à Deux Lits"—by J. Maddison Morton, "with the evident purpose of giving Mr. Buckstone and Mr. Harley some special fun to enact"—the former being the Box, the latter the Cox. In 1866, Mr. (now Sir) F. C. Burnand took Maddison Morton's "book" in hand with a view to adapting it to the musical requirements of Arthur Sullivan. The names in the title of the old farce were reversed, and "Cox and Box" is still played at benefits by amateurs. So that this "amusing interlude," as it was called in 1847, has held the stage for over sixty years.

During June and July, the Gaiety Theatre was occupied by the entire company from the Theâtre Français, an event of great importance in the dramatic world, for the Comédie Française then included M. Got, M. Delaunay, M. Coquelin, M. Mounet Sully, Mlle. Croizette, Mlle. Samary, and, last but not least, "Mlle." Bernhardt—she was so styled on the bills. Their performances attracted the greatest attention, and, not unnaturally, Henry Irving's experiment at the Lyceum came in for comparison with the representations given by the members of the House of Molière: "Side by side with the performances of the most perfectly organised and the most richly endowed dramatic company in the world, we have the opportunity of witnessing the result of some eight or nine years' labour on the part of a single actor to revive, not the interest of a select circle of dilettanti, but the practical sympathy of the general public of this country in the higher forms of the drama. First, as the employé of a most shrewd and able manager, next as the virtual partner in management, lastly as sole and autocratic manager himself, Mr. Irving has had the opportunity of working in the service of an art which he loves, and for an end which, from the commencement of his career, among countless discouragements and in spite of frequent disappointments, he has always kept in view. We cannot help thinking that a fair comparison of the services rendered to art by Mr. Irving and the Comédie Française will not be unfavourable to the former, and will reassure those lovers of the drama in England whom the visit of our talented guests may have somewhat disconcerted."

Many of these "guests" were made welcome at the Lyceum. So, also, were some writers who came in their train. These writers, not knowing English, were unable to appreciate Irving in all his parts, but Richelieu and Louis XI., being familiar to them, were understood. The great theatrical critic, the late Francisque Sarcey, saw Irving in the latter character. "He is a master," he wrote, "of the art of dressing and making up for a character. His Louis XI. seems like a portrait of the time detached from its frame. The whole of the first part of Louis XI. is played in a sober and very animated style. In the second, I thought he went too far in seeking for realistic effects. Thus, when Nemours leaves him with his life, he remains for some time with his face on the ground, uttering inarticulate cries. At times, with his bursts of true passion, and his bizarre eccentricities, he reminds one of Rouvière, over whom he has the advantage of being elegant and proud of aspect. His face is mobile and animated; his smile is very pleasing. His hands are graceful and speaking, and are used on the stage with great skill. In the last act, when he appears in all the paraphernalia of royalty, and, awaking from a sort of trance, rises up and stretches out his trembling fingers to pluck the crown from the Dauphin, the attitude is superb, and a painter who was with me at the time gave vent to a cry of admiration."

Another eminent French critic, M. Jules Claretie—now the adminstrator of the Comédie Française—saw Irving as Richelieu, Hamlet, and Louis XI. "The name of M. Henry Irving," he wrote, "must be added to the last of the greatest actors who have graced the English stage. The production of 'The Bells' marks an important turning-point in his career. Down to that time, he had been simply applauded; since then, he has been received with enthusiasm. The truth is that he possesses considerable tragic power, joined to a perseverance and a love of his art, in which but few could have equalled him. . . . 'Richelieu' was the first play in which I saw M. Irving. Here he is superb. The performance amounts to a resurrection. The great Cardinal, lean, worn, eaten up with ambition, less for himself than for France, is admirably rendered. His gait is jerky, like that of a man shaken by fever; his eye has the depth of a visionary's; a hoarse cough preys upon that feeble frame. When Richelieu appears in the midst of the courtiers, when he flings his scorn in the face of the mediocrity that is to succeed him, when he supplicates and adjures the vacillating Louis XIII., M. Irving endows that fine figure with a striking majesty.

"What a profound artist this tragedian is! The performance over, I was taken to see him in his dressing-room. I found him surrounded by portraits of Richelieu. He had before him the three studies of Philippe de Champaigne, one representing Richelieu in full face, and the others in profile. There was also a photograph of the same painter's full length portrait of the Cardinal. When he plays Louis XI. M. Irving studies Comines, Victor Hugo, Walter Scott, and all who have written of the bourgeois and avaricious king, who wore out the elbows of his 'pourpoint de ratine' on the tables of his gossips, the skindressers and shoemakers. The actor is an adept in the art of face-painting, and attaches great importance to the slightest details of his costume.

"M. Irving is as agreeable off the stage as he is upon it. His dressing-room, with the pictures it contains and the hospitality which awaits visitors thereto, reminds one of the 'loge artistique' which the novel of Madame Sand, 'Pierre qui Roule,' or the famous drama of Alexandre Dumas, 'Kean,' presents to the imagination. In this case, however, we must not add the second title of the play referred to, 'Désordre et Génie'. In the society of M. Irving, you feel under the inspiration of a lettered artist and gentleman.

"M. Irving's literary and subtle mind leans to psychological plays, plays which, if I may so express myself, are more tragic than dramatic; he is the true Shakespearean actor. 'Richelieu,' a work of but little value and false to history, acquires vitality in his hands; he draws it up to his own level. The same is the case with 'The Bells' and 'The Lyons Mail'. Mathias has the deep remorse of a Macbeth; the destiny which governs Hamlet weights over the head of Lesurques. How great was the pleasure which the performances of Hamlet afforded me! The spectre appears with effects of electric light under the stars. The interior of the palace, with its Roman columns, the flags suspended from the arches, the raised throne and the tiger skins which lie about it, and lastly, the taste and variety of the costumes, bring to mind some of the pictures from the easels of Alma Tadema and Jean Paul Laurens. The courtiers bow to the King; Polonius bends under the weight of age; the guards are in mail. In the midst of these splendours Hamlet appears, superb, pale, borne down by a great sorrow. M. Irving is admirable in the play and death scenes; in the latter it seems as though he saw his father again in the depths of the infinite. The scene of the burial of Ophelia—the representative of whom, Miss Ellen Terry, would be taken by one for a pre-Raphaelite apparition, for a living model of Giovanni Bellini—is put on the stage with remarkable completeness. Here, again, is a picture which Laurens might have painted. I have never seen anything so deeply, tragically true.

"In 'Louis XI.' M. Irving has been adjudged superior to Ligier. Dressed with historical accuracy, he is admirable in the comedy element of the piece and the chief scenes with the monk and Nemours. The limelight, projected like a ray of the moon on his contracted face as he pleads for his life, excited nothing less than terror. The hands, lean and crooked as those of a Harpagon—the fine hands whose character is changed with each of his rôles, aid his words. And how striking in its realism is the last scene, representing the struggle between the dying king and his fate! In a word, I have been much struck by the beautiful acting of M. Irving. I hope that he will be induced to play in Paris. In Shakespearean parts, he would create a sensation—would exercise a powerful influence upon many men."

Irving's unfailing courtesy was extended to Sarah Bernhardt, when she first came, a stranger in our midst, in this year, 1879. The circumstances are thus related by Madame Bernhardt in her recently-published autobiography: "Everything looked dark and dismal, and when I reached the house, 77 Chester Square, I did not want to get out of my carriage. The door of the house was wide open, though, and in the brilliantly lighted hall I could see what looked like all the flowers on earth arranged in baskets, bouquets, and huge bunches. . . . 'Have you the cards that came with all these flowers?' I asked my man-servant. 'Yes,' he replied, 'I have put them together on a tray. All of them are from Paris, from Madame's friends there. This is the only bouquet from here.' He handed me an enormous one, and on the card with it I read the words, 'Welcome, Henry Irving'."

Irving, as it may be readily understood, was exceedingly busy with his ordinary work during this season, yet he found time for an interview with a representative of the press, on the subject of his audiences, which is of considerable interest. It was suggested that in his case, there was an active sympathy and confidence on both sides of the footlights that was practically unique in the history of acting. "I don't know," he replied, "that it is without parallel; but in the presence of my audience I feel as safe and content as sitting down with an old friend." He was then asked if, under the influence of an audience, he had ever altered his reading of a part during a first representation. "Except once," he replied, "no; I can always tell when the audience is with me. It was not with me in 'Vanderdecken,' and I changed the last scene. Neither was it on the first night of 'Hamlet'. I then felt that the audience did not go with me until the first meeting with Ophelia. Now I know that they like it—are with me, heart and soul. 'Hamlet' has been my greatest pecuniary success. Before 'Hamlet,' so far as regards what is called the classic and legitimate drama, my successes, such as they were, had been made outside it, really in eccentric comedy. As a rule, actors who have appeared for the first time in London in such parts as Richard III., Macbeth, Hamlet, and Othello, have played them previously for years in the country. My audience knew this, and I am sure they estimated the performance accordingly, giving me their special sympathy and good wishes. I believe in the justice of audiences; they are sincere and hearty in their approval of what they like, and have the greatest hand in making an actor's reputation. Journalistic power cannot be overvalued; it is enormous: but in regard to actors it is a remarkable fact that their permanent reputations, the final and lasting verdict of their merits, are made chiefly by their audiences. I am quite certain within twelve hours of the production of a new play of any importance all London knows whether the piece is a success or a failure, no matter whether it has been noticed in the papers or not. Each one of the audience is the centre of a little coterie, and the word is passed on from one to the other.

"I confess I am happiest in the presence of what you call the regular play-going public. I am apt to become depressed on a first night. I know that while there is a good hearty crowd who have come to be pleased, there are some who have not come to be pleased. Audiences are intellectually active, and find many ways of showing their opinions. One night, in 'Hamlet,' something was thrown on the stage from the gallery. The donor was a sad-looking woman, evidently very poor, who said she often came to the Lyceum gallery, and wanted me to have this little heirloom. Here it is—an old-fashioned gold cross. On both sides is engraved 'Faith, Hope, and Charity'; on the obverse, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins'; and on the reverse, 'I scorn to change or fear'. They said in front that she was a poor mother who had lost her son. At Sheffield one night, in the grouse season, a man in the gallery threw a brace of birds on the stage with a rough note of thanks and compliments, and one of the pit audience sent me round a knife which he had made himself. The people who do these things have nothing to gain; they judge for themselves, and they are representative of that great public opinion which in the end is always right. When they are against you it is hard at the time to be convinced that you are wrong; but you are."

In August, 1879, Henry Irving had been before the public continuously for nearly twenty-three years. In all that time—as readers of this biography can see for themselves—but scant leisure had been his. He had not enjoyed a real rest since his boyish days. With a great position achieved, and a mind comparatively free from care, he was now able to accept an invitation to accompany a party of friends which had been formed by the Baroness Burdett-Coutts for a cruise in her yacht, the *Walrus*, to the Mediterranean. This, his first voyage from his native shores was the means of a recuperation of health of which he stood in much need. The party left Weymouth on 31st July, and arrived at Malta on 22nd August.

CHAPTER XVIII.

20th September, 1879—31st July, 1880.

Money paid for unproduced plays—Mr. A. W. Pinero's first piece—"The Iron Chest" revived—Irving's impersonation praised—His speech on the first night—Preparations for "The Merchant of Venice"—Small amount expended on scenery—"This is the happiest moment of my life"—Irving's own statement regarding the scenery—His interpretation of Shylock in 1879 eulogised by the *Spectator*—The leading critics of the day write in praise—An "unobtrusive" background—Illness of Miss Ellen Terry—A feeble outcry—Ruskin incensed—The hundredth night—A wonderful transformation—Distinguished guests—Lord Houghton surprises his hearers—Irving's humorous reply—An act of generosity—"Iolanthe"—Irving's speech on the last night of the season—The receipts.

Irving began his season of 1879-80 under the best of auspices. Refreshed in mind and body, he was ready and eager for the fray. Although he held the highest place in the estimation of the public, no one felt more keenly than he himself that it could only be sustained by increased vigilance and incessant work. He did not rest upon his oars either now or at any other time. It was his intention to revive, in the season which was about to begin, famous plays, not only of Shakespeare, but of other authors, and he was in treaty with some of the ablest of contemporary writers for new plays. He had also publicly announced his desire to have frequent changes of bill. In two of these good resolutions, fate helped him to a contrary decision. The gloom of "The Iron Chest" caused him—very happily—to abandon all thought of those lugubrious and stilted dramas, "The Stranger" and "The Gamester". On the other hand, the magnificent success of "The Merchant of Venice" made it impossible for the prudent manager to withdraw that play until two hundred and fifty performances—the longest run of any Shakespearean piece—had been given. As for new plays, he was already in negotation with the Poet

Laureate and he produced the two first plays written by Mr. Arthur W. Pinero. Again, during this season he paid out no less a sum than £900 to authors on account of plays which he could not produce, including £150 for a piece on the subject of "Robert Emmet" and £700 for "Rienzi".[1] It was said at the time, and the prophecy was fulfilled, that "Mr. Irving has only to go on as he has begun to make the Lyceum Theatre a national institution, not by a vote granted by Act of Parliament, but by the consensus of opinion amongst those who take most interest in our acted drama as it is, and who have most faith in its future development." The Lyceum, under his management, was a national theatre, but without a subsidy.

The opening night of the autumn season[2] was 20th September, "The Bells" being the attraction. It was preceded by Bayle Bernard's old farce, "The Boarding School," acted by Miss Myra Holme, Miss Florence Terry, Miss Pauncefort, Mr. J. H. Barnes, and others ; and it was followed by "an original comedietta," entitled "Daisy's Escape," Mr. Pinero's first play. The "escape" is that of a young girl from an ill-chosen bridegroom, with whom she is foolishly eloping for want of something better to do. Daisy White has run away in haste with Mr. Augustus Caddel, and, before the journey is over, she repents at leisure her unaccountable choice of a future husband who is vulgar, rude, and ill-tempered. The conduct of the badly-matched couple and their conversation are very diverting, and, as the piece was well played at the Lyceum, it became popular. Mr. Pinero—who was a member of the Lyceum company from January, 1877, until July, 1881—was the eccentric Mr. Caddel, Miss Alma Murray was the Daisy, and Mr. Frank Cooper a young lover.

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[1] "Mr. Tennyson's new drama, 'Thomas à Becket,' has been sent to Mr. Irving, with a view to its production at the Lyceum. If accepted, it will have to be considerably reduced."—The *Theatre*, 1st October, 1879.

[2] During his absence from London, the Lyceum was let by Irving for four weeks (at £150 a week), to Miss Geneviève Ward, who produced, on 2nd August, an "original romantic drama" called "Zillah," in which she "doubled" two characters. The play was a dire failure, and was immediately succeeded by an adaptation from Victor Hugo's tragedy, "Lucretia Borgia," in which Miss Ward played the leading rôle. On 21st August, the first performance took place of "Forget-me-Not" in which Miss Ward, in the character of Stephanie de Mohrivart, acquired great celebrity. Mr. Forbes Robertson was the original Horace Welby.

"The Bells," however, was only a stop-gap pending the completion of the preparations for the revival, on Saturday, 27th September, of George Colman the Younger's play, "The Iron Chest," which was first brought out at Drury Lane in 1796. It is founded on Godwin's novel, "Caleb Williams". It is, at best, a dull and heavy piece, and the Lyceum revival served the good purpose of banishing it to an oblivion in which it has since remained. The play was written by John Philip Kemble, and the failure was, with gross unfairness, attributed by the author to the actor. "Frogs in a marsh," wrote Colman, "flies in a bottle, wind in a crevice, a preacher in a field, the drone of a bagpipe, all, all yielded to the inimitable and soporific monotony of Mr. Kemble." The play was condemned by Macready, and, although Edmund Kean acted Sir Edward Mortimer finely, he could not put much life into the sombre tragedy. Moreover, in Irving's case, the chief part being that of a murderer who suffers from remorse, there was too much reminder of Mathias and Eugene Aram in it. Again, the language is of the most bombastic kind, and, although there are sixteen parts in the play, there are really only two characters, Sir Edward Mortimer and his secretary, Wilford. Irving put his own individuality into the character, and with good effect. From the moment when, dressed as a gentleman of the last decade of the eighteenth century, with bloodless face and prematurely grey hair, he was first seen by the audience—the dull glare of the fire falling upon the figures in armour and the antique furniture of the library—from that moment until the death, under the pressure of a troubled conscience, of Sir Edward Mortimer, he fascinated the spectators. His best acting was found in the pathos which he infused into the speech as to the captured poacher, the restrained anguish with which he related the story of his crime, the depth of meaning underlying his seemingly commonplace injunctions to Wilford, his cruel and inflexible resolution in preferring the false charge against the latter, his fierce agony at the discovery of his secret, and, above all, the revulsion of feeling with which he fell upon Wilford's shoulder with a plea of forgiveness. In this, as in all the characters portrayed by him which had been written before his time, he departed from precedent. It was noticed, moreover, that he enunciated every word with a remarkable clearness and that every action was distinguished by self-contained repose. The merit of his performance was generally recognised in the press, so much so, indeed, that he appended to his programme, after the first night, three pages of excerpts therefrom. "As a picture of despair and resolution," said the *Athenæum*, "sombre and funereal, illumined by bursts of passion which rend and convulse the frame, and are yet as evanescent as they are powerful, the performance is marvellous. The grimmer aspect of Mr. Irving's powers has never been seen to equal advantage, and if the performance is not so fine as the Louis XI., it is only because the comic element is wanting. Mr. Irving's face is capable of being charged

THE IRON CHEST.

Revived at the Lyceum, 27th September, 1879.

SIR EDWARD MORTIMER	MR. IRVING.
CAPTAIN FITZHARDING -	MR. J. H. BARNES.
WILFORD - - -	MR. NORMAN FORBES.
ADAM WINTERTON -	MR. J. CARTER.
RAWBOLD - - -	MR. MEAD.
SAMSON RAWBOLD -	MR. S. JOHNSON.
PETER - - - -	MR. BRANSCOMBE.
GREGORY - - -	MR. TAPPING.
ARMSTRONG - - -	MR. F. TYARS.
ORSON - - - -	MR. C. COOPER.
ROBBERS - - -	MESSRS. FERRAND, CALVERT, HARWOOD, ETC.
ROBBERS' BOY - -	MISS HARWOOD.
LADY HELEN - -	MISS FLORENCE TERRY.
BLANCHE - - -	MISS MYRA HOLME.
BARBARA - - -	MISS ALMA MURRAY.
JUDITH - - -	MISS PAUNCEFORT.

ACT I., SCENE 1. Rawbold's Cottage; SCENE 2. Hall in Sir Edward Mortimer's House; SCENE 3. Ante-room in Sir Edward Mortimer's House; SCENE 4. Sir Edward's Library. ACT II., SCENE 1. The Ante-room; SCENE 2. The Library. ACT III., SCENE 1. Lady Helen's Cottage; SCENE 2. A Ruined Abbey. ACT IV., SCENE 1. The Library; SCENE 2. The Hall; SCENE 3. The Library. Period, 1794.

with any amount of tragic expression, and it is not easy to conceive a picture of remorse burning fiercely behind the closed shutters of a resolute will more powerful than that he presents in the scene in which he sets himself to work a cruel and deliberate vengeance on the boy whose curiosity has stirred his fears." It will be remembered that Irving, as a boy, had acted Wilford, and, from his own experience of the part, he was able to assist the representative of the character at the Lyceum.

Irving's speech on the first night of "The Iron Chest" showed how unsafe it is to make any promises in the affairs of the play-house. "Ladies and Gentlemen," he said, "I need hardly tell you how delighted I am on this, the first representation of a play in which none of us have appeared before, at the manner in which you have received it. It is no easy task, I assure you, to get through a piece of this kind without exciting —well, to say the least, some amusement. I am proud to find that you have listened to it with interest, and I am the more pleased because it is my intention to reproduce other old plays. This one will in future be added to our repertory. It will improve on acquaintance, as you will find: if you come and see it again. It will be played every evening for a reasonable time until further notice." But, after 27th October, "The Iron Chest" vanished from the Lyceum stage and repertory, and was played no more by Henry Irving. A reference to the cast will show the presence in it of many admirable actors. Colman's play was preceded by "Daisy's Escape" and followed by "The Boarding School," so that the programme was a full one. As in the case of "Hamlet," Irving published his acting version of "The Iron Chest," to which he appended the following note: "In presenting 'The Iron Chest' to the public, I have adhered to the original form of the play as closely as is consistent with the exigencies of the modern stage. I have taken as the period the year 1794, a somewhat different date from that hitherto chosen. In doing so, I have been guided by the original story—Godwin's novel of 'Caleb Williams,' from which the principal characters and many of the incidents of the play were drawn."

While Colman's dreary drama was dragging its painful course, the preparations for the revival of "The Merchant of Venice" were proceeding apace. Pending this production, "Hamlet" was given on certain evenings, beginning on Wednesday, 15th October, with Miss Ellen Terry, returned from a provincial tour, as Ophelia. The first night of "The Merchant of Venice" at the Lyceum was Saturday, 1st November, 1879. The general effectiveness of the production was a revelation. But it was made so by intelligence and admirable acting, not, as some people seem to think—if we are to judge by their writings—by the scenery. In 1896, as we have already seen, Henry Irving had publicly stated that the total cost of the production was £1,200. Yet, in a book published two years later, we are told that the revival was "on a scale entirely unparalleled in its magnificence. . . . Up to that time [November, 1879] no play had been mounted with such astonishing care and completeness"—a statement, by the way, that was a little unfair to the productions by Charles Kean at the Princess's. The false idea about the "magnificence" of the revival doubtless had its origin in the pages of *Blackwood's Magazine*. In April, 1879, there had appeared an article in which Irving's Hamlet had been attacked, in the course of which the actor was described as labouring at his work "like an athlete of Michael Angelo, with every muscle starting and every sinew strung to its utmost tension". In the December number, "The Merchant of Venice" came in for severe handling by a writer who apparently sought to belittle the players of the day by the process of exalting a certain admirable actress, but one whose career had closed. He decried, in language which now seems strange, so wanting was it in judgment, Sarah Bernhardt as well as Miss Terry. "It was no less than pitiable," he said, "to see how people who profess to be learned in the matters of art went mad over the feeble performances of Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt last summer." Such essays in "criticism" do not matter much in the end, but they are open to censure when they mis-state facts. The wholesale condemnation of Miss Terry's Portia is rather amusing reading nowadays. But to descant upon the revival of "The Merchant of Venice" as though the manager had spent a fortune on the scenery was the outcome of a wrong impression. There was really nothing in the scenery to rave about. This may be imagined from the fact that less than two months had been occupied in active preparations for the production. This is shown from Irving's speech at the end of the first performance when "the pit, the dress circle, and the gallery rose at Mr. Irving and the roar of applause must have aroused the neighbourhood". In response to the customary demand for a speech, he said: "This is the happiest moment of my life, and I may claim for myself, and those associated with me in this production, the merit, at least, of having worked hard, for on the 8th of October last, not a brush had been put upon the scenery, nor a stitch in any of the dresses". He concluded by thanking the audience in the words of Bolingbroke in 'Richard II.':—

> I count myself in nothing else so happy
> As in a soul remem'bring my good friends.

From time to time during the run, there were additional expenses for new scenes and costumes, but the total production account for "The Merchant of Venice" only amounted, at the end of July, 1880, to £2,061—a wonderfully small sum for a "magnificent" Shakespearean production. The truth of the matter was that the beautiful pictures presented in the course of the play were the result of art—the scene painters, Mr. Hawes Craven, Mr. Walter Hann, and Mr. William Telbin working for a general purpose which was expressed by Henry Irving in the prefatory note to his acting version of the play: "In producing 'The Merchant of Venice,' I have endeavoured to avoid hampering the natural action of the piece with any unnecessary embellishment; but have tried not to omit any accessory which might heighten the effects. I have availed myself of every resource at my command to present the play in a manner acceptable to our audiences."

Irving's interpretation of Shylock in his first revival differed materially from that of later years. His Jew was then an extremely dignified and sympathetic figure. Several Jewish writers considered it as a vindication of their race. There were many discussions as to the correctness, or otherwise, of this reading of the character, but, no matter what view was taken on that point, there was nothing but praise for the effectiveness of the rendering. The London and provincial papers had many columns of glowing praise, much of which was as discriminating as it was eulogistic. It is well to see how the Shylock of 1879 impressed the unbiassed critics of that time. This can be done by taking the evidence of the *Spectator* which, in the course of a long article, said: "Mr. Irving's Shylock is a being quite apart from his surroundings. When he hesitates and questions with himself why he should go forth to sup with those who would scorn him if they could, but can only ridicule him, while the very

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

Revived at the Lyceum, 1st November, 1879.

Shylock - - - - -	Mr. Irving.
Duke of Venice - - -	Mr. Beaumont.
Prince of Morocco - - -	Mr. Tyars.
Antonio - - - - -	Mr. Forrester.
Bassanio - - - - -	Mr. Barnes.
Salanio - - - - -	Mr. Elwood.
Salarino - - - - -	Mr. Pinero.
Gratiano - - - - -	Mr. F. Cooper.
Lorenzo - - - - -	Mr. N. Forbes.
Tubal - - - - -	Mr. J. Carter.
Launcelot Gobbo - - -	Mr. S. Johnson.
Old Gobbo - - - -	Mr. C. Cooper.
Gaoler - - - - -	Mr. Hudson.
Leonardo - - - - -	Mr. Branscombe.
Balthazar - - - -	Mr. Tapping.
Stephano - - - - -	Mr. Ganthony.
Clerk of the Court - -	Mr. Calvert.
Nerissa - - - - -	Miss Florence Terry.
Jessica - - - - -	Miss Alma Murray.
Portia - - - - -	Miss Ellen Terry.

Act I., Scene 1. Venice—A Public Place; Scene 2. Belmont—Portia's House; Scene 3. Venice—A Public Place. Act II., Scene 1. A Street; Scene 2. Another Street; Scene 3. Shylock's House by a Bridge. Act III., Scene 1. Belmont—Room in Portia's House; Scene 2. Venice—A Street; Scene 3. Belmont—Room in Portia's House; Scene 4. Venice—A Street; Scene 5. Belmont—Room in Portia's House. Act IV., Scene. Venice—A Court of Justice. Act V., Scene. Belmont—Portia's Garden, with Terrace.

stealthy intensity of scorn of them is in him, we ask, too, why should he? He would hardly be more out of place in the 'wilderness of monkeys,' of which he makes his sad and quaint comparison when Tubal tells him of that last coarse proof of the heartlessness of his daughter 'wedded with a Christian'—the bartering of his Leah's ring. What mean, pitiful beings they all are, poetical as is their language, and fine as are the situations of the play, in comparison with the forlorn, resolute, undone, baited, betrayed, implacable old man who, having personified his hatred of the race of Christians in Antonio, whose odiousness to him, in the treble character of a Christian, a sentimentalist, and a reckless speculator, is less of a mere caprice than he explains it to be. He reasons calmly with the dullards in the Court concerning this costly whim of his, yet with a disdainful doubt of the juctice that will be done him; standing almost motionless, his hands hanging by his sides—they are an old man's hands, feeble, except when passion turns them into gripping claws, and then that passion subsides into the quivering of age, which is like palsy—his grey, worn face, lined and hollow, mostly averted from the speakers who move him not; except when a gleam of murderous hate, sudden and deadly, like the flash from a pistol, goes over it, and burns for a moment in the tired, melancholy eyes! Such a gleam there came when Shylock answered Bassanio's palliative commonplace, with—

Hates any man the thing he would not kill?

At the wretched gibes of Gratiano, and the amiable maundering of the Duke, the slow, cold smile, just parting the lips and touching their curves as light touches polished metal, passes over the lower part of the face, but does not touch the eyes or lift the brow. This is one of Mr. Irving's most remarkable facial effects, for he can pass through all the phases of a smile, up to surpassing sweetness. Is it a fault of the actor's or of ours that this Shylock is a being so absolutely apart, that it is impossible to picture him as a part of the life of Venice, that we cannot think of him 'on the Rialto' before Bassanio wanted 'monies,' and Antonio had 'plunged' like any London City man in the pre-'depression' times, that he absolutely begins to exist with the 'Three thousand ducats—well?' These are the first words uttered by the picturesque personage to whom the splendid and elaborate scene, whose every detail we have previously been eagerly studying, becomes merely the background. He is wonderfully weird, but his weirdness is quite unlike that of any other of the impersonations in which Mr. Irving has accustomed us to that characteristic; it is impressive, never fantastic—sometimes solemn and terrible. There was a moment when, as he stood, in the last scene, with folded arms and bent head, the very image of exhaustion, a victim, entirely convinced of the justice of his cause, he looked like a Spanish painter's Ecce Homo. The likeness passed in an instant, for the next utterance is:—

> My deeds upon my head. I crave the law,
> The penalty and forfeit of my bond.

"In the opinion of the present writer, his Shylock is Mr. Irving's finest performance, and his final exit is its best point. The quiet shrug, the glance of ineffable, unfathomable contempt at the exulting booby Gratiano, who having got hold of a good joke, worries it like a puppy with a bone, the expression of defeat in every limb and feature, the deep, gasping sigh, as he passes slowly out, and the crowd rush from the court to hoot and howl at him outside, make up an effect which must be seen to be comprehended. Perhaps some students of Shakespeare, reading the Jew's story to themselves, and coming to the conclusion that there was more sentiment than legality in that queer, confused, quibbling court, where judge and advocate were convertible terms, may have doubted whether the utterer of the most eloquent and famous satirical appeal in all dramatic literature, whose scornful detestation of his Christian foes rose mountains high over what they held to be his ruling passion, drowning avarice fathom deep in hatred, would have gratified those enemies, by useless railing, and an exhibition of impotent rage. But there is no 'tradition' for this rendering, in which Mr. Irving puts in action for his Shylock one sense of Hamlet's words—'The rest is Silence'. The impression made by this consummate stroke of art and touch of nature upon the vast audience was most remarkable, and the thrill that passed over the house was a sensation to have witnessed and shared."

It is a curious fact that there was absolute unanimity among the three leading dramatic critics of the day concerning this revival. Dutton Cook, Joseph Knight, and Clement Scott expounded and praised the acting of Henry Irving and Miss Ellen Terry. The first-named writer emphasised the fact that the actor had obtained complete mastery of himself. "The performance is altogether consistent and harmonious," he wrote, "and displays anew that power of self-control which has come to Mr. Irving this season as a fresh possession. Every temptation to extravagance or eccentricity of action was resolutely resisted, and with the happiest results. I never saw a Shylock that obtained more commiseration from the audience; for usually, I think, Shylock is so robustly vindictive and energetically defiant, as to compel the spectators to withhold from him their sympathies. But Mr. Irving's Shylock, old, haggard, halting, sordid, represents the dignity and intellect of the play; beside him, the Christians, for all their graces of aspect and gallantry of apparel, seem but poor creatures." He wrote of Miss Terry: "A more admirable Portia there could scarcely be. Nervous at first, and weighed down possibly by the difficulty of equalling herself and of renewing her former triumph, the lady played uncertainly, and at times with some insufficiency of force; but, as the drama proceeded, her courage increased and her genius asserted itself. Radiantly beautiful in her Venetian robes of gold-coloured brocaded satin, with the look of a picture by Giorgione, her emotional acting in the casket-scene with Bassanio; her spirited resolve, confided to Nerissa, to prove 'the prettier fellow of the two'; her exquisite management of the most melodious of voices in the trial before the Doge; the high comedy of the last act—these left nothing to be desired, and obtained, as they deserved, the most enthusiastic applause."

It is significant, in view of the irresponsible talk about the "magnificence" of the production, that Mr. Cook does not mention the scenery at all until the end of his criticism and then only to say that: "The new scenes by Mr. Hawes Craven and others are excellently artistic, and the costumes and furniture very handsome and appropriate". Nor did Mr. Knight feel himself called upon to decry the "splendour" of the mounting—which he certainly would have done had there been occasion. On the contrary, he considered the performance "an interpretation superior to anything of its class that has been seen on the English stage by the present generation, while, as a sample of the manner in which Shakespeare is hereafter to be mounted, it is of the highest interest. In thus speaking"—and the point is very important—he expressly stated that he did not confine his "praise to what may be called the upholstery portion of the accessories. An immense stride has been made in the direction of a thoroughly satisfactory presentation of the early drama, and the foundation is established of a system of performances which will restore Shakespeare to fashion as an acted dramatist, and will render attractive to the student, whatever his culture, that observation of the acted drama of Shakespeare which is indispensable to a full estimate of his powers. A background which is at once striking, natural, and"—mark this word—"unobtrusive, is supplied, and from this the action receives added intelligibility." The same critic cited, as an example of Irving's "ingenious and intelligent explanation and comment in the shape of action," the introduction among the spectators of the Trial scene of a knot of eager and interested Jews upon whom the sentence upon Shylock, condemning him to deny his religion, fell like a thunderbolt. Another thoughtful interpretation of the meaning of the poet will be recalled by recent witnesses, as well as the earlier ones, of Henry Irving's Shylock, namely, the return of Shylock after the flight of Jessica. The pathetic figure of the Jew, lantern in hand, on the darkened stage, as he knocks and waits at the door of the deserted house is one of those illuminating bits of acting which denote the great interpreter. For they are within the spirit of the play and illustrate, without exaggeration, the true meaning of the dramatist. He did not "read Shakespeare by flashes of lightning," but by supreme intelligence and patient study.

On the first night of the revival, Irving had to bear much of the burden in addition to his own interpretation and his legitimate responsibilities as a manager. For instance, he was slightly disconcerted in the scene of Shylock's discovery of the loss of his daughter and his ducats by a blunder on the part of the representative of Tubal. Again, the general performance was good, but some of the players, despite their excellent reputations, did not do themselves justice on this important occasion. Antonio and Gratiano, for instance, were "but weakly interpreted," according to one writer of authority, while Clement Scott censured the Nerissa as "an unfortunate mistake in more ways than one," for the character should be individual, "and not a feeble echo of Portia. There should be contrast, and not diminutive imitation. Under any circumstances, the employment of sisters would be hazardous, but in this case a very distressing attack of nervousness blunted the activity of Miss Florence Terry, and jeopardised several important scenes." These first-night trials, however, did not mar the general effect: they were soon remedied, and the play sailed for months on the smooth sea of success.

"The Merchant of Venice" was played without a break for seven months—a record without precedent and one that since has had no equal. Of course, there were a few petty troubles, but Irving was so attuned to such things that he invariably triumphed over them. A heavy fog descended upon London in the middle of December, and penetrated, as is the wont of such evil ministrations, into every playhouse. In the Lyceum, according to a scribe who was usually truthful, it was difficult to discern the features of the actors or the colours of their costumes: “Mr. Irving as Shylock felt his way about the stage looking for that ‘pound of flesh,’ and in the final scene the soft moonbeams were very irreverently referred to, and bright pictures referred to by fond lovers on ‘such a night as this’ seemed a trifle facetious.” More distressing, perhaps, than the fog was the indisposition of Miss Ellen Terry in February. Happily, however, there was a substitute of more than usual ability in Miss Alma Murray, who played Portia for several nights. The performance was described as “exceedingly intelligent and pleasing. The youthful actress has an expressive face, a voice of sweet and silvery quality, and a style in which quiet power and gentleness are blended. These attributes enabled her to give a very effective reading of portions of the play, notably the scene of the three caskets.” So that the revival did not suffer materially from Miss Terry’s temporary absence.

No manager can protect himself against fogs and the illness of members of his company. These are incidents of everyday life. But Henry Irving was always liable to assaults of the kind from which even prominent actors are usually free. In November, he had been praised, as was his due, for having restored to the stage the fifth act of “The Merchant of Venice”. In the case of the majority of his predecessors, this scene had always gone by the board, for, as Shylock disappears from the stage with the Trial scene, they had no need for it. Now, however, there was a feeble outcry because it was announced that on the occasion of Miss Terry’s benefit in May—when a one-act play was to be given for the first time—the last act of Shakespeare’s drama would be omitted. It seems scarcely credible, but it is a fact that a printed form of protest against the proposed “mutilation” was vigorously circulated, the promoters of the petition being four in number—a well-known critic of the time, an antiquarian writer, an individual whose name was otherwise unknown, and the part author of a vulgar burlesque. This impudent attempt to interfere with the prerogative of the manager met with the contempt which it deserved. For, in due course, Miss Terry had her benefit and played Iolanthe, the last act of "The Merchant of Venice" being omitted on that occasion. Another interesting incident arose from a visit of Mr. Ruskin to the Lyceum. It was afterwards reported, by a "good-natured friend," that he had met the representative of Shylock after the performance and had congratulated him upon an interpretation "noble, tender, and true," whereat the great art critic waxed exceedingly wroth. "In personal address to an artist, to whom one is introduced for the first time," he wrote to a correspondent, "one does not usually say *all* that is in one's mind. And if expressions limited, if not even somewhat exaggerated, by courtesy, be afterwards quoted as a total and carefully expressed criticism, the general reader will be—or may be easily—much misled. I did and *do* admire Mr. Irving's own acting of Shylock, but I entirely dissent (and indignantly, as well as entirely) from his general reading and treatment of the play.[1] And I think a modern audience will *invariably* be not only wrong, but diametrically and with polar accuracy opposite to, the real view of any great author in the moulding of his work." Of course, this dogmatic assertion may possibly be right. If so, the many thousands of people who have seen and applauded Irving in "The Merchant of Venice" must be wrong.

But the most surprising of the events which occurred during the first run of "The Merchant of Venice" at the Lyceum was in connection with the celebration of the hundredth performance of the play. The unexpected does not always happen, assertions to the contrary notwithstanding, even in theatrical management. But St. Valentine's Day, 1880, ushered in a most curious and utterly unforeseen circumstance at the Lyceum, the toast of the evening—the health of the honoured host—being made the vehicle for airing personal views at the expense of the giver of the feast. The incidents which led up to this extraordinary breach of custom and of etiquette must be briefly related. On the afternoon of 14th February, "The Merchant of Venice" was played for the hundredth time. In celebration of this unique event, some three hundred and fifty gentlemen, every one of whom was a celebrity—art, science, law, medicine, the army, commerce, literature, politics, and society being well represented—were invited by Henry Irving to supper in the theatre. It was natural, for the Lyceum was then strange to such celebrations, that curiosity should be piqued as to the nature of the affair, and those who had expected something out of the common were not disappointed. The mere stage-management was a triumph of management. At eleven o'clock, the curtain fell on the garden scene of Portia's house at Belmont, and, at nine minutes before midnight the first of the procession of guests entered upon the stage. During the fifty-one minutes which had elapsed, a veritable transformation scene had been effected. All the paraphernalia of the stage and the piece had been removed, and over the whole vacant space, of some four thousand square feet, rose an immense pavilion of white and scarlet bands, looped around the walls with tasteful draperies, and lit by two gigantic chandeliers, whose hundreds of lights, in lily-shaped bells of muffled glass, shone with a soft and starry radiance, and by the twinkling gleams of many hundreds of wax candles which rose in clusters from the long tables. The transformation was so magically effected, and displayed such thoroughness of organisation in all concerned, that to those interested in the practical working out of effects, some details may not come amiss. In seven and a half minutes, the stage was cleared to the bare walls, and in fifteen minutes the pavilion was erected, the chandeliers were hung, and the stage servants, numbering some hundreds, reinforced by the manipulators of the pavilion, retired in favour of the refreshment contractors, who put another army in the field, over one hundred strong. In the meantime, the guests were assembling. Entering the private doorway in Exeter Street, they passed through a passage crimson-carpeted, gracious with graceful palms and many-coloured flowers piled along the sides and up the margin of the staircase. Through a curtained door, they entered the armoury of the theatre, itself a picture, with its gleaming arms of every kind and date: pikes, helmets, breastplates, whole suits of plate and chain armour, swords of every make and date, all arrayed in admirable order, shields, racks of muskets, and all the paraphernalia of the various Lyceum repertory. Thence they passed into the reception-room, which was none other than the club-room of the old Beefsteak Club, enlarged to its fullest extent, with Tudor arches and groined ceiling, its oaken panelled walls of soft green, rich with choice paintings, conspicuous among which was Long's portrait of Irving as Richard III. The room was set with beautiful furniture of various periods, a number of high palms and graceful foliage plants, placed in every corner, forming an admirable background. At a few minutes before twelve, a move to the supper-room took place, the host bringing with him Lord Houghton and Admiral Sir Henry Keppel, who sat at his right hand and his left, supported by the Earls of Dunraven, Fife, and Onslow, Lord Londesborough, Sir Frederick Pollock, Admiral Gordon, Sir Coutts Lindsay, Sir Henry Thompson, Sir Charles Young, Sir Gordon Cumming, Tom Taylor, J. L. Toole, Mr. (as he then was) Alma Tadema, W. G. Wills, Major-General Hutchinson, Mr. (now Sir Squire) Bancroft, and a host of others. There were nine long tables, eight from the concealed footlights upwards, and one across. It was a very remarkable sight; the huge pavilion with its myriad lights and brilliant lines and fairy-like melting distance, as the light of the theatre, kept full ablaze, shone dimly through the canvas like starlight upon a summer sea; the great banner with its legend of crimson on a ground of grey velvet—"At first and last the hearty welcome," which hung on the tent wall opposite to the dais table, the beautiful grouping of palms and exotics which ranged the walls, and the wealth of flowers which graced the tables. Not merely these features were remarkable, but the elements of which the gathering was composed. One could not look in any direction without seeing dozens of faces of men conspicuous for their acts.

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[1] It would have been impossible for Ruskin, unless he had recanted, to express his approval of the Lyceum revival, for, in 1862, he had set down his opinion of Shakespeare's play: "And this (the inhumanity of mercenary commerce) is the ultimate lesson which the leader of English intellect meant for us (a lesson, indeed, not all his own, but part of the old wisdom of humanity), in the tale of 'The Merchant of Venice'; in which the true and incorrupt merchant, or usurer, the lesson being deepened by the expression of the strange hatred which the corrupted merchant bears to the pure one, mixed with intense scorn—'This is the fool that lent out money gratis; look to him, jailor' (as to a lunatic no less than criminal) the enmity, observe, having its symbolism literally carried out by being aimed straight at the heart, and finally foiled by a literal appeal to the great moral law that flesh and blood cannot be weighed, enforced by Portia (Portion), the type of divine fortune, found, not in gold, not in silver, but in lead; that is to say, in endurance and patience, not in splendour."

It must have been a proud moment for Henry Irving, as he sat at the head of his table, ringed round by all the leaders of his time, and granted the premier position in his chosen art by the suffrages of all. The supper was a very elaborate affair; during its progress a quintet discoursed soft and finished music, and at its close when the host proposed the loyal toast "the Queen and the Royal Family," a choir of boys' voices broke out into the National Anthem. The music from the unseen musicians stole softly through the empty house and fell on the ears of those within the pavilion with the quiet faintness of distance. The attendants then brought round books of "The Merchant of Venice," as arranged by Irving, specially prepared for the occasion. They were bound in white parchment and lettered in gold, the cover as well as the title-page containing the dates of the production of the piece at the Lyceum and of the hundredth performance. In the first page of each was printed in red letters Irving's favourite quotation from Richard II. Bound in the volume was the bill of the play for the evening. Presently Lord Houghton[1] arose amid a hush of expectation, to propose the one toast of the evening. It was in the course of his speech that the unexpected happened. He said: "This was a convivial and private meeting, but he was commanded to give them a toast—'The health of Mr. Henry Irving and the Lyceum Theatre'. The occasion on which they met was a centenary of the performance of 'The Merchant of Venice'. He did not like centenaries, but 'Our Boys' had had a great many centenaries and therefore our men should have more. 'The Bells of Corneville' had been ringing on he did not know how many nights, and 'The Bells' of Alsace nearly as many. For his part, looking back to the days of his youth, he preferred the arrangement by which the same pieces came on never more than twice a week, when one could see various actors in various rôles with various and additional interest, and he was not sure that the present system did not entail upon the performers great personal exertions almost to the injury of their health, and he was quite sure it could not be any great benefit to art. But things must be accepted as they were, and it was under that state of things that Mr. Irving had accepted the management of that theatre, and he had done so under very favourable auspices, for dramatic art was popular with all classes. He had come also at a time when the stage was purified very much from the impurity, and it might be the scandal attaching to it before, so that the tradition of good breeding and high conduct was not confined to special families, like the Kembles, or to special individuals, like Young or Mr. Irving himself, but had spread over the larger part of the whole profession, so that families of condition were ready to allow their sons, after a university education, to enter into the dramatic profession. There had been a school of historians who had taken upon themselves to rehabilitate all the great villains of the world. These historians made Nero and Tiberius only a little diverted from their benevolent intention, either by the wish to promote order amongst their people or by an inordinate love of art. They made Richard III. a most amiable sovereign, particularly fond of nephews, while French historians showed that Marat and Robespierre were only prevented from regenerating the human race by their dislike to shedding human blood. While upon that stage they had seen a rehabilitation of something of the same nature, for the old Jew, Shylock, who was regarded usually as a ferocious monster, whose sole desire was to avenge himself in the most brutal manner on the Christians of his neighbourhood, had become a gentleman of the Hebrew persuasion, with the manners of Rothschild, and not more ferocious than became an ordinary merchant of the period, afflicted with a stupid, foolish servant, and a wilful, pernicious daughter; and the process went on till the Hebrew gentleman, led by a strange chance into the fault of wishing to vindicate in his own person the injuries of centuries of wrong to his ancestors, is foiled by a very charming woman; but he, nevertheless, retired as the avenger of the wrongs of centuries heaped upon his race, accompanied by the tears of women and the admiration of men. He could quite imagine if Mr. Irving chose to personate Iago he would be regarded, not as a violent, but as a very honest man, only devoted to the object of preserving the honour of his wife; or if he chose to resume the character of Alfred Jingle he would, instead of a disreputable character, go down to posterity as nothing more than an amiable young man who wished to marry the maiden aunt and give her some of the joys of married life. But there was one character which Mr. Irving would never pervert or misrepresent, and that was his own. He would always show in the management of his theatre the dramatic spirit which his country demanded. He would always be the true artist, loving art for its own sake, following in the personalities which he represented no mere dramatic form, not merely tradition, but carrying out as best he could the high forms of his own great imagination. They would see him in his relations with others, as in the management of the theatre—and that was a very large relation—they would see him considerate to all about him, kind and cognisant of the merits of others—a very difficult thing in all forms of art, and especially in the one Mr. Irving occupied. He believed that under these circumstances Mr. Irving would achieve a great name, and that when the children's children of those at that gathering were reading the dramatic annals of the present time, and found how highly the name of Mr. Irving had been mentioned under all conditions of dramatic life, they would be proud to find from their family traditions that their progenitors had been there that night." Lord Houghton concluded by proposing the health of Mr. Irving, which was drunk with enthusiasm, the guests rising to do honour to the toast.

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[1] Houghton, Richard Monckton Milnes (1809-1885), poet, educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was an "Apostle" and a friend of Tennyson, Hallam, and Thackeray; M.A., 1831; travelled 1832-6; Conservative M.P., Pontefract, 1837; did much to secure the Copyright Act; published poems of a meditative kind, and political and social writings.

The speech was not a happy one, nor in good taste for such an occasion—the celebration of the marked success of a play—and it seemed to disappoint the listeners till the last sentence or two, which they received with such applause as showed, by contrast, their dissatisfaction at the cynical mirth of the speaker. On rising to reply, Mr. Irving was received with loud and continuous cheers and the waving of handkerchiefs, which, in the great expanse of the room, produced a very peculiar effect. He said that it had been his intention not to afflict his guests with any long set speeches. He had, however, been over-ruled by a dear and valued friend, who told him it was nonsense; that his health would have to be proposed, and who had undertaken to nominate the proposer. Lord Houghton had kindly undertaken the task, so that he had not been taken by surprise at the toast being given. He had been thinking of what to say in response, but as Lord Houghton had not, as he had anticipated, described him as the most extraordinary person that had ever trod the face of the earth, who had done wonders for dramatic art and other things—not a bit of which he believed himself—his speech in reply had been knocked into a cocked hat. He was very much indebted, however, to Lord Houghton, for during his speech he had begun to think seriously about a play which he had in his possession—an admirable play in five acts—in blank verse. It was not by Lord Houghton, but perhaps by a friend of his. It was called "The After-Life of Shylock". The last scene might be made singularly effective—Shylock returning to

Belmont with a basket of lemons on his back. Being pathetically told in blank verse, he did not know but that this side of Shylock might be made interesting for all the tribe, and, as it was a very large one, their sympathy and countenance contributed a great deal towards the success of any play. They came from all parts to see "The Merchant of Venice," and the only people who did not like it were the Germans. Seriously, however, he did not know how to thank them for the kind way in which they had responded to the toast; but, however, they could not at that hour discuss Shylock, for they were not a Shakespearean debating society. He desired, on his own behalf, and as equally on behalf of one who was not present, but who had contributed so greatly to the success of "The Merchant of Venice," and who, he could not but regret, was unable to grace that board with her wit and beauty, and, on behalf of all the Lyceum company, present and absent, to thank the noble lord for the kind and friendly manner in which he had spoken of them. There was not one of the company who was not pleased at the meeting to celebrate the hundredth performance of "The Merchant of Venice". They all felt as modest and as grateful as he did himself that they should have been able to carry on the play so long, a result which he did not think could have been attained if Shylock had been the Whitechapel old gentleman which he has been sometimes represented, and which appeared to be the ideal of the character in the mind of my Lord Houghton, but which was certainly not his own conception. Though people would come to the thousandth representation of "The Corsican Brothers," "The Merchant of Venice" was proverbially an unpopular play, and they could only be grateful for the gifts which the gods had provided. Again he must thank one and all of his guests for honouring him with their presence; and although they had not, as they did to the fair lady of Belmont, come from the four corners of the earth, to this place, they had certainly come from the four corners of Great Britain and Ireland. Looking round the tables he saw men of all stations and of all creeds; and knowing that they were allied by the ties of art and friendship, he believed that Shakespeare himself, if he could be present, would rejoice to think that the seed he had sown broad-cast three centuries ago had borne such good fruit, and that the work which he had done for the sake of art brought fortune in its wake. He could not say more in conclusion, than by repeating the beautiful words of Shakespeare :—

> I count myself in nothing else so happy
> As in a soul rememb'ring my good friends.

At the conclusion of his speech, which was delivered with grace and dignity, the actor received a perfect ovation. All the guests stood up, and cheer after cheer, again and again repeated, rang through the pavilion. It was a sight never to be forgotten, and every actor in the room felt that the occasion had done much for the dignity of his art and the social status of the actor.

Immediately after the adjournment to the smoking-room, Irving's great friend, the late J. L. Toole, apparently dissatisfied with the tone and manner of the proposal of the toast of the evening, himself made a speech in reference to the occasion, and a more graceful, earnest, or generous setting forth of the views of himself and his brother actors could not have been given. The hearty approval and continuous applause which his eloquent words evoked did credit to the general good feeling which prevailed. The night was not long enough for the entertainment, for daylight came upon the company smoking in the Beefsteak Room, whilst still unwilling to depart. So closed one of the most brilliant gatherings ever held under the auspices of dramatic art.

A characteristic act of generosity was performed by the actor-manager during the early part of the run of "The Merchant of Venice". Not only did he lend his theatre, but he played Digby Grant, for the benefit of an old actor, William Belford, who had fallen on evil times. The entertainment took place on Wednesday afternoon, 10th December, 1879, and realised the sum of £1,100, so that the last days of the veteran player—he died within two years of the benefit

—were relieved from pecuniary anxiety. Miss Ellen Terry also appeared on this occasion, and delivered an address from the pen of Mr. Clement Scott, who, by the way, wrote that the impersonation of Digby Grant was infinitely better than that of 1870. Five months later, Irving acted another part which he had already played, although in another version of the same story. It will be recalled that in June, 1876, he had acted Count Tristan, the young lover, in "King René's Daughter," to the Iolanthe of Helen Faucit, for his own benefit. On 20th May, 1880, for the benefit of Miss Ellen Terry, a new adaptation of Henrik Hertz's poem, made by W. G. Wills, was given—after the fourth act of "The Merchant of Venice"—under the title of "Iolanthe," and Irving was the Tristan to Miss Terry's Iolanthe. Towards the end of the season, a few performances of "The Bells" and "Charles the First" took place. The programme for the last night, 31st July, was, as usual on these occasions, a miscellaneous one. "Charles the First" was followed by songs by Mr. Herbert Reeves and a reading by Mrs. (now Lady) Bancroft; Sims Reeves sang "The Bay of Biscay" and "Tom Bowling"; Miss Terry recited—for the first time—"Monk" Lewis's poem, "The Captive"; and J. L. Toole gave his favourite sketch, "Trying a Magistrate". Irving's recitation of the "Dream of Eugene Aram" was still popular—and remained so throughout his career—despite the complaints of a certain Sunday paper. A speech on such occasions was an invariable part of the programme. In the course of his address to his friends, Irving apologised for not having been able to keep his word in certain respects. "When I stood before you this time last year," he said, "I laid down a programme of intentions for this past season which I honestly intended to fulfil. In my intentions, however, I was frustrated by those of more than a quarter of a million of people. Having bowed to their wish, I am obliged to appear before you as a man guilty in a way of a breach of promise—of breaches of several promises. Your judgment of the play which has occupied nearly the whole of the past season—'The Merchant of Venice'—was spoken with no uncertain voice, and that your judgment was right in the minds of the larger portion who were not here to give their opinion on the first of last November was shown by the fact that for 250 performances the piece held the Lyceum stage. I shall, therefore, take to heart the lesson of last season, and when telling you of our hopes for the next, I shall merely say definitely what we are going to open with, and then, lest you should think that I am vain enough to suppose that every piece will run a season, I shall promise that no piece shall be kept in the bills longer than you desire. I have several plays to produce, and when I think of the number of them, I am inclined to hope that some of them will be disastrous failures; for really if they all prove successes, I shall be placed in an awkward position—in fact tossed on the horns of a dilemma; either I shall have to break faith with you by not doing what I wish to do, or I shall have to fly in the face of Providence by exceeding the limit of years allotted to man. I have a play by Alfred Tennyson—a very remarkable play—which I shall positively produce in the coming season. I have also a play by Mr. Wills in my possession—another remarkable play, I believe—on the subject of Rienzi. I have also in my possession an historical drama by Mr. Frank Marshall. Mr. Alma Tadema has completed his magnificent series of studies for Coriolanus, and there is another Shakespearean play I wish to produce as soon as possible—that is, if the public will only be good enough to help me a little by staying away. However, I shall open about the middle of September with 'The Corsican Brothers,' and shall hope to see on the opening night many of those friends whose faces cheer and gladden me to-night. I must thank you for your reception to-night, not only of myself, but of all my fellows who have come forward on this occasion. As they have not the opportunity of thanking you personally, it is my privilege to do so for them, and I must thank them myself. It is a very great delight to be surrounded by such friends. I feel, in conclusion, I should before you, and in the most public way I can, thank all the members of the Lyceum for their good and loyal services during the season.

You will be more than glad to know that I have been fortunate in retaining the services, in spite of innumerable baits to take her away, of Miss Ellen Terry, and how you appreciate her exceptional gifts is shown by your reception of her to-night. For myself, I thank you again and again, and au revoir with a hearty good-bye."

The receipts for this season amounted to the respectable sum of £59,000—an average of close upon £200, a performance. Of this amount, £500 was brought in by the sale of the books of "The Merchant of Venice". The monetary capacity of the Lyceum was much smaller then than in 1882, and subsequently, as will be gathered later on.

CHAPTER XIX.

18th September, 1880—29th July, 1881.

Mr. Pinero's "Bygones"—Favourable comment—"The Corsican Brothers" revived—Introduction of the souvenir—"The Cup" in preparation—Tennyson and "Becket"—Cost of production of "The Cup"—A notable audience—Camma and Synorix—"The Belle's Stratagem" revived—Edwin Booth at the Lyceum—The true story of this engagement—Booth's testimony—Also, William Winter's—Booth's tribute to Irving—Various revivals—Irving as Modus—His speech on the last night of the season—Takes the chair at the Theatrical Fund Dinner—A satirical speech—Interesting reminiscences.

According to the promise made in July, the Lyceum was re-opened on 18th September, with Henry Irving—Miss Ellen Terry was again touring the country on her own account—in "The Corsican Brothers". On the same evening, and preceding the chief piece, Mr. Pinero's "Bygones" was brought out. The staging of a new first piece on such a night was an innovation which was hailed with delight by all play-goers, especially the patrons of the cheaper parts of the house. To modern ideas, the innovation may not seem so important as it really was. The almost startling nature of the change, however, drew much favourable comment to the management of the Lyceum. "Punctuality, order, and good taste are the watchwords of Mr. Irving's management," Clement Scott pointed out in the *Daily Telegraph*, "and the days of discord during the preliminary piece are at an end. Time was when managers had too much to think about with their novelty to attend to pretty plays for opening the evening's entertainment, and were content that an exciting melodrama should be preceded by a noisy farce, indifferently acted. Discipline can soon correct this error, and those who had taken the trouble to come early were rewarded with a great treat in the shape of a charming one-act play, full of gentle and refined feeling. Tinged with an occasional flavouring of genial humour, and acted extremely well, Mr. A. W. Pinero would have been pleased, could he have taken his attention from the character he was acting so well, to find that he had touched the hearts of his audience by the simple pathos of his homely story. . . . Freshly written, neatly constructed, and with a decided originality in the treatment of an old story, 'Bygones' not only pleasantly opened the evening with a pretty surprise, but the applause that greeted the young author must have assured him that whenever he makes a bolder bid for fame, he will receive the sympathetic encouragement of those who have watched his brief career with interest, and who see far more than average merit in his well-considered and conscientious work. The pathetic simplicity and comic innocence of a simple, old gentleman as played by Mr. Pinero, had a charming contrast in the freshness and simplicity of Miss Alma Murray as the girlish heroine, Ruby."

This was a good beginning, and but heightened the expectancy with which "The Corsican Brothers"[1] was awaited. This kind of melodrama is now out of fashion in West-end London—although "The Corsican Brothers" was played with success by Mr. Martin Harvey, long a member of the Lyceum company, for a brief season at the Adelphi Theatre in the autumn of 1907—but Irving, relying upon his own individuality and popularity, which he was careful to supplement with a fine production, secured a profitable return from his revival of the old piece. Irving contrasted the twin brothers most admirably, and, in the scenes with Château Renaud, he quite overpowered the late William Terriss. His best effect was in the duel scene in the last act. His calm, determined appearance suggested the very embodiment of fate. "He seldom has acted so well, with such solidity and purpose," said a contemporary critic.

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[1] "Les Frères Corses," the famous story by Alexandre Dumas, was first adapted to the stage in 1850. On 10th August of that year it was presented at the Théâtre Historique, Paris. There were several English versions, but the best of them was that made by Dion Boucicault—a very clever specimen of this kind of work, by the way—for Charles Kean, who produced it at the Princess's Theatre on 24th February, 1852. This was the version used by Irving. Fechter, who was the original stage representative of the brothers, in Paris, brought out a version at the Lyceum on 17th May, 1866. He excluded the sliding-trap and he made but little use of the famous "ghost melody". G. H. Lewes thought that Kean, in the lighter scenes of the two first acts, wanted the light and graceful ease of Fechter; but in the more serious scenes and throughout the third act, he surpassed the Frenchman with all the weight and intensity of a tragic actor in situations for which the comedian is unsuited.

THE CORSICAN BROTHERS.

Revived at the Lyceum, 18th September, 1880.

M. Fabien dei Franchi M. Louis dei Franchi	Mr. Henry Irving.
M. de Château Renaud	Mr. W. Terriss.
The Baron de Montgiron	Mr. Elwood.
M. Alfred Meynard	Mr. Pinero.
Colona	Mr. Johnson.
Orlando	Mr. Mead.
Antonio Sanola	Mr. Tapping.
Giordano Martelli	Mr. Tyars.
Griffo	Mr. Archer.
Boissec	Mr. Carter.
M. Verner	Mr. Hudson.
Tomaso	Mr. Harwood.
M. Beauchamp	Mr. Ferrand.
A Surgeon	Mr. Louther.
Emilie de Lesparre	Miss Fowler.
Madame Savilia dei Franchi	Miss Pauncefort.
Marie	Miss Harwood.
Coralie	Miss Alma Murray.
Celestine	Miss Barnett.
Estelle	Miss Houliston.
Rose	Miss Coleridge.
Eugenie	Miss Moreley.

Act I., Scene 1. Corsica—Hall and Terrace of the Chateau of the Dei Franchi at Cullacaro. The Apparition. The Vision. Act II., Scene 1. Paris—Bal de l'Opera; Scene 2. Lobby of the Opera House; Scene 3. Salon in the House of Montgiron; Scene 4. The Forest of Fontainebleau. The Vision. Act III., Scene. Fontainebleau—Glade in the Forest. The Duel. The Vision.

"There he stood, defiant, with vengeance in his eyes and scorn in his accent. Surely he knows that this man must die at his hands, and so he does not shrink from his terrible purpose. To make the scene completely effective, Château Renaud should play the game as firmly from his point of view as Fabien does. We should scarcely sympathise with the practised duellist, who appears to us absolutely powerless in the hands of the Corsican—powerless all through, at the first and the last. However, the scene is effective as it was, intense, weird, and gloomy—and what is lost in the presence of Château Renaud is gained in the poetic accessories of the scene that closes the story with solemnity, but makes a marked impression upon the beholders." It is indicative of Irving's policy that while he thought it necessary to decorate the play to the best of his ability—it has never been presented, apart from his revivals, so sumptuously—he retained, not only the old-fashioned "ghost melody" which runs through the play, but the still more old-fashioned ghost which came up through a trap-door, facing the audience in stilted fashion. It was in vain that modern inventions in the matter of lime-light and magic lanterns were brought to his notice. He steadily refused all the examples set before him of the ghosts presented by conjurers. He had made up his mind to have the old-fashioned ghost—and he had it. "The Corsican Brothers" drew enormous houses to the Lyceum until January, when a new play by the Poet Laureate was produced. It was then acted in conjunction with that piece, one hundred and ninety performances being given during the season. "The Corsican Brothers" was reproduced at the Lyceum in 1891—May to July—and acted, together with "Nance Oldfield," fifty-seven times. During its first run at the Lyceum, Irving introduced one of the profitable devices of management—the souvenir. That of "The Corsican Brothers" is a rather quaint brochure, the illustrations of which, and the style of printing, are now completely out-of-date, In the 1880-81 season, this source of revenue brought £235 odd into the Lyceum treasury. During November, so great was the demand for seats at the Lyceum, eight performances a week had to be given. On 5th October, it should be recorded, the actor managed to travel to Birmingham—without interrupting the performances at the Lyceum—in order to open a bazaar for the Perry Bar Institute, of which he was then the ex-president.

While "The Corsican Brothers" was in the full tide of its prosperity at the Lyceum, Miss Ellen Terry was appearing in the principal provincial towns, together with Mr. Kelly, as Lilian Vavasour, Lady Teazle, and Portia. Her most remarkable achievement at this period was the performance of Beatrice. On the evening of Friday, 3rd September, 1880, "Miss Ellen Terry will play Beatrice for the first time on any stage, at the Grand Theatre, Leeds". So ran the preliminary announcement of what proved to be the forerunner of the revival at the Lyceum of "Much Ado About Nothing" one of the most brilliant pages in the achievements of Henry Irving. In July, Irving had spoken of "a remarkable play" by Alfred Tennyson. This was "The Cup," active preparations for the production of which were made early in October. It is related that the poet, in speaking of this piece to his friend, the late William Allingham, said: "I gave Irving my Thomas à Becket: he said it was magnificent, but it would cost him £3,000 to mount it: he couldn't afford the risk. If well put on the stage it would act for a time, and it would bring me credit (he said), but it wouldn't pay. He said, 'If you give something short, I'll do it'. So I wrote him a play in two acts, 'The Cup'." It is further related that on the 4th of the month preceding the actual production, the late Sir James Knowles wrote to the Poet Laureate: "Irving is in a great state of excitement, and he is most anxious that you should read over the play, not only to himself and Ellen Terry, but to all the company which is to enact it. He would like it to be on next Thursday week, when Ellen Terry will be back in town and everything advanced enough to make such a reading of the greatest and most opportune value." Now, as to the "risk" of spending £3000 on the Becket play, that was but a polite way of postponing a piece which, in its written form, was unactable, and, as Irving knew from his experience, in 1876, with the same writer's "Queen Mary," good poets did not always write good plays. It was not a question of money at all: he knew that Becket was unsuitable for the stage, and, at the time, it would have been injudicious to have suggested the drastric compression which he himself afterwards made.

As a matter of fact, the production account of "The Cup" amounted to £2,369 4s. 1d., and that of Becket to £4,723 1s. 2d. On the day that Knowles wrote to Tennyson, over £450 had already been paid out on account of scenery for "The Cup".

The production took place on Monday, 3rd January, 1880, before one of the most representative audiences ever seen at the Lyceum: the Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone, with Mrs. Gladstone and other members of his family, occupied one of the stage boxes, while literature, art, and science furnished many other celebrities. Flowers were rained upon Miss Terry, and the calls were innumerable. A speech, it need hardly be said, was demanded, and the actor-manager, who promised to telegraph the news of the success of the piece to the author, congratulated himself on the honour of producing such a play, and hinted that it would not be the last experiment of the kind.

THE CUP.

First acted at the Lyceum, 3rd January, 1881.

GALATIANS:

Synorix	Mr. Irving.
Sinnatus	Mr. Terriss.
Attendant	Mr. Harwood.
Boy	Miss Brown.
Maid	Miss Harwood.
Phœbe	Miss Pauncefort.
Camma	Miss Ellen Terry.

ROMANS:

Antonius	Mr. Tyars.
Publius	Mr. Hudson.
Nobleman	Mr. Matthison.
Herald	Mr. Archer.

Act I., Scene 1. Distant view of a City in Galatia. (Afternoon); Scene 2. A room in the Tetrarch's house. (Evening); Scene 3. Distant view of a City of Galatia. (Dawn.) Half a year is supposed to elapse between the acts. Act II., Scene. Interior of the Temple of Artemis. The scene is laid in Galatia, a Province of Asia Minor.

As "The Cup" has now passed out of the acted drama—it would never have seen the stage save for the special circumstances which caused its production at the Lyceum—it is unnecessary to enter into details concerning the acting. The case for the play and the players was summed up by an able writer of the day who, after discussing the work of the poet and the merits of the production, said: "All these things are important aids to a dramatist; and a far greater one is to be found in the acting, for the two principal characters, Synorix and Camma, are filled by two performers capable of poetry in its highest significance—Mr. Henry Irving and Miss Ellen Terry. Camma possesses everything, loses nothing, in Miss Terry's representation. Her fair beauty, her movements, free and graceful, her tender tones, win the heart, and the passion of Synorix is at once understood. She wears the Greek costume as if she had been born in it, and as if by chance, but probably by the study that knows how to conceal itself, she falls into positions which recall the best of the Greek sculptures. Her song of love and fear stirs our sweetest emotions, and when, as the Priestess—white and cold, with a stony stare—she moves on to her act of meditated punishment or revenge, she does not strut, or bellow, or assume a new character, but is still the same woman, though with another passion at her heart. She speaks verse with an appearance of spontaneity, and at the same time with a full appreciation of the sound and music of the poet. Synorix is a personage who demands all Mr. Irving's skill and intellect to give him interest, for, beyond his intelligence and strength of purpose, he has no quality to call our sympathy. As now acted, he is interesting. His ruling passion, his craft, his courage, and the destiny towards which he seems impelled to move, are so shown forth as to stimulate and constantly engage attention; yes, even when, the glow of the setting sun stealing over the mountain tops threaten to distract general observation; and one of the audience exclaiming, 'Oh! look at the sunset, it is quite real!' is silenced by another, who replies in a tone of rebuke, 'Hush! Irving is going to speak, and he is still more a reality'."

The mounting of Tennyson's drama was superb. The scene in which Synorix, at the very moment of his triumph, when the laurel wreath binds his brow and love seems to crown his hopes, is destroyed by the woman who appeared to yield to his will only to complete her revenge, was a remarkable picture. The interior of the temple looked like a solid piece of architecture; and the huge figure of the goddess, Artemis, the grouping of the worshippers, the invocation, and the thunderclap which answered Camma's appeal, gave a wonderfully vivid realisation of the solemnity of the heathen rites. "The Cup," beautiful as it was, in many respects, was not sufficiently long for an evening's entertainment. So it was played in conjunction with "The Corsican Brothers" until 9th April, when the theatre was closed for a few nights during Good Friday week. When the Lyceum re-opened, on 16th April, the melodrama was replaced by "The Belle's Stratagem," with Miss Terry as Letitia Hardy and Irving as Doricourt—the character which he had first acted at the St. James's Theatre in 1866. One hundred and ninety performances were given of "The Corsican Brothers," one hundred and twenty-seven of "The Cup".

The next event at the Lyceum was one of the most remarkable incidents in the history of the theatre—the appearance of the American actor, Edwin Booth, with Henry Irving and Miss Ellen Terry, in "Othello". Those who have followed the history of the great English actor so far will not need to be told that this act of good feeling and generosity has been frequently misrepresented. These slanders have long ago found their own level, but, for all that, the true story may now be given, and an interesting one it is. It has frequently been stated that the suggestion that Booth should play at the Lyceum emanated from Irving, as a master-stroke of diplomacy. But the true state of the case was the exact opposite. The proposition came from Booth. Precisely two years before he did appear at the Lyceum, the following statement was authoritatively issued: "It is highly probable that Mr. Booth will appear with Mr. Irving in two or three pieces at the Lyceum Theatre, London, next year". Booth had written to Irving, and, in a letter dated 27th April, 1879, from Chicago, he mentions that he had not yet had a reply from him. The suggestion fell through, but it was revived, as a consequence of Booth's professional visit to England in 1880. On 6th November, of that year, Booth began an engagement at the Princess's Theatre, in "Hamlet." "The choice of that part," says his biographer, William Winter, "was not, perhaps, judicious, since it seemed to challenge comparison with the reigning favourite of the London stage, Henry Irving. Booth was apprised that the newspapers in general would be hostile to him, and the anticipation of harsh treatment thereupon made him stern and cold. . . . The courteous and gelid manner commonly adopted by the London press, and sometimes carried to a ludicrous extreme, is not always accompanied by either depth of thought, wisdom of judgment, or depth of feeling. Some of the London journals talked down to Booth from an Olympian height which they had not previously been supposed to occupy. In the main, however, he was received with honour. Many pages might be filled with tributes from the newspapers. Booth's embodiments of Richelieu, Bertuccio, Iago, and Lear elicited public sympathy and enthusiastic fervour."

It is perfectly obvious, from these observations by the doyen of American critics—and one of Booth's most devoted friends—that there had been an endeavour to promote hostile feeling. It was yet another case of "save me from my friends". In 1880, London was an unknown land to all but a mere handful of Americans, and even they did not understand either London or its newspaper press. It was a mistaken policy on their part to state that Henry Irving was jealous of their representative actor. As will presently be seen, upon the testimony of Edwin Booth, the men were perfectly good friends; they met at the houses of mutual acquaintances, they interchanged the ordinary civilities and courtesies of everyday life. When Booth first appeared in London as Hamlet, the performance was analysed with marked care and generous good feeling. The criticisms—or rather, garbled accounts of them—were cabled to New York and made the subject of acrimonious comment. Booth had arrived in London, at the end of August, without any definite plan. He wanted to open in London in the spring, but he "found that time at Drury Lane was promised to McCullough, and Irving preparing a new production". In this dilemma, he accepted an offer to play at the newly-constructed Princess's Theatre, "which is now a mass of ruins". The remainder of the story, leading up to his appearance at the Lyceum in May, 1881, is contained in the letters written by him, from November, 1880, to his friends in America—

OTHELLO.

Revived at the Lyceum, 2nd May, 1881.

Othello	Mr. Edwin Booth.
Iago	Mr. Henry Irving.
Cassio	Mr. W. Terriss.
Brabantio	Mr. Mead.
Roderigo	Mr. Pinero.
Duke	Mr. Beaumont.
Montano	Mr. Tyars.
Gratiano	Mr. Carter.
Ludovico	Mr. Hudson.
Messenger	Mr. Matthison.
Paulo	Mr. Ferrand.
Antonio	Mr. Clifford.
Julio	Mr. Louther.
Marco	Mr. Harwood.
Emilia	Miss Pauncefort.
Desdemona	Miss Ellen Terry.

Act I., Scene 1. A Street in Venice; Scene 2. Another Street in Venice; Scene 3. A Council Chamber. Act II., Scene 1. The Harbour at Cyprus; Scene 2. A Street in Cyprus; Scene 3. The Court of Guard. Act III., Scene. Othello's House. Act IV., Scene 1. Othello's House; Scene 2. A Street in Cyprus; Scene 3. Exterior of Iago's House; Act V., Scene. A Bedchamber.

Edmund Clarence Stedman and David C. Anderson. "I've been and gone and done it! The cable has told you all about it," he wrote, a week after his appearance at the Princess's. "I cannot but add that the feeling for me is warming every day, and the faint praises lavished by the press have tended rather to increase than to diminish the interest. From various *high places* I have kindly words of encouragement, and the vista looks lovely. After the programme is changed ('Hamlet' is so hackneyed!), there will also be a change of tone in the theatrical columns of the papers. The few attempts at *criticism* I have seen are very feeble and wishy-washy. Shakespeare is yet a sealed book to those who sit in judgment on the actor." He certainly had a poor opinion of London critics, for, on the day after he had penned the observations just quoted, he wrote: "the myriad English papers have been full of me—all, with but a few exceptions, patting me on the back, and endeavouring to damn me with faint praise. But the public is with me, and I received many cordial congratulations from high jink nobs of Britain. As we used to say in the classic days, 'Ye goose 'angs 'igh,' etc., and in a few weeks I shall have had even the 'crickets' chirping pleasantly." The "crickets" chirped pleasantly enough over Booth's Richelieu and Lear, and all was well.

But the American actor had many disadvantages to contend against. On 17th December, he writes: "Irving called over,[1] but we have had little opportunity to chat. I have the greatest odds to battle with that an actor ever experienced, in spite of all the good in my favour that I have mentioned. A deep-rooted love for their idol, who certainly deserves his reward for what he has achieved for the drama here; an unpopular theatre—that is, unpopular with the first-class element: for years, a sort of 'Bowery,' given up to 'Drink,' 'Streets of London,' etc.—and a sort of 'Cheap John' management, with a wretched company, and poorly furnished stage, compared with Irving's superior settings." On 9th January, Booth wrote: "Irving has lately been very genial and attentive; he is a pleasant fellow. Yesterday he called, and we had a pleasant hour together. He gave me a fine copy of a celebrated portrait of Richelieu, and we are to lunch together on Wednesday at Lady Burdett-Coutts'."

[1] Booth stayed at the now demolished St. James's Hotel during this visit. He frequently mentioned the weather in his letters. For instance: "I've been fortunate in weather, very few fogs, and they slight"—Americans used to regard London in winter as a city of perpetual fog. "The nights are really beautiful," he also observed. All lovers of London are aware that the hours between midnight and dawn are, with hardly an exception, beautiful indeed, in the great city.

We now arrive at the Lyceum engagement, and the evidence of William Winter is invaluable, for it shows precisely how it was effected. Booth, he states, "had formed the plan of giving a series of morning performances in London, to include a round of parts, and he now proposed to Henry Irving that these performances should occur at the Lyceum Theatre. Irving at once accepted that proposal, but a little later suggested a combination between Booth and himself, with the purpose of presenting 'Othello,' and alternating the characters of Othello and Iago—the performances to be given at night. That plan, conceived by Irving, and suggested in a spirit of rare and fine generosity, was adopted, and on 2nd May, 1881, Booth made his first appearance at the Lyceum Theatre, performing Othello. Irving was Iago—which he played for the first time in his life. The matchless Ellen Terry was the Desdemona. The picturesque William Terriss assumed Cassio. Mead, with his sonorous and beautiful voice, presented Brabantio. Miss Pauncefort appeared as Emilia, and Mr. Pinero as Roderigo."

We have an interesting sidelight on this engagement from Booth himself. It must have been an enormous relief to him, after his trials and tribulations at the Princess's, to play in the well-ordered Lyceum. Writing on the day after the closing of his season at the Oxford Street house, he said: "At last my *great* London engagement is ended. Thank God, a thousand times, again and again repeated! I never had such an uphill drag of it in all my professional experience, to say nothing of the many annoyances connected with the mean and tricky management of —— and —— . . . On the whole, the critics have used me well. So Irving and I are at last to hitch together, but only for a short pull of four weeks at 'Othello'. Every seat worth securing is booked for the greater part of the brief term of our combination, and London is very much excited over it." Again, on 8th May, he wrote: "All went well. . . . Irving, his company, and the audiences treat me splendidly. . . . The houses are jammed, the play well set and very well acted." In a letter written at the time of the engagement, to William Winter, he said: "Its success is very great, in all respects, and only my domestic misery"—the serious illness of his wife—"prevents it from being the happiest theatrical experience I have ever had. I wish I could do as much for Henry Irving, in America, as he has done for me here." In a subsequent conversation with his biographer, he spoke of his season with Irving at the Lyceum as one of much happiness. Such testimony should silence cavil in regard to this engagement, once and for all. The two actors remained friends to the end. In July, 1882, Booth was in London again: "Irving was with me last night till two this A.M. Winter, Aldrich, and Barrett came a few days ago, and we all dined together last night. Saturday, after the play, we 'chop' with Irving. Headache Sunday." The last two words indicate that Booth and Irving enjoyed more than one pleasant evening together! Five months later, Booth saw "Much Ado About Nothing" at the Lyceum, and pronounced it "the finest production, in every respect, I ever saw. Terry is Beatrice herself: Irving's conception and treatment of the part are excellent."

A week after the beginning of the engagement at the Lyceum—that is to say, on 9th May—Booth played Iago and Irving Othello. In the latter character, Irving obtained his chief success in the earlier scenes, where he was impressive, self-contained, and stately. He declaimed well, and he delivered Othello's address to the Senate with excellent art. In appearance, he resorted to magnificence of a barbaric sort: "Jewels sparkle in his turban and depend from his ears, strings of pearls circle from his dusky throat, he is abundantly possessed of gold and silver ornaments, and his richly-brocaded robes fall about him in the most lustrous and ample folds. He is blacker of face than the Othello of the stage has ventured to be since the times of Macready, and altogether he presents as superb an appearance as an Eastern king pictured by Paolo Veronese."[1] As for Iago, "the spirit and originality of the embodiment" according to the late L. F. Austin, "fairly won most of his unfriendly critics. They were carried away by the brilliant devilry of the whole performance. There was the soldierly frankness which made the appelation 'honest Iago,' so natural. Never did a fiend wear so engaging a mask, and the careless freedom with which this Iago ate grapes was even made a source of complaint by some writers, who persuaded themselves that for Iago to eat grapes when he was meditating murder was too horrible a mockery." It should be stated that "Othello" was in no sense an elaborate "production," as some people would have us believe. The play was artistically and beautifully put on the stage, but there could not be much of a "production" for £643—still, that was a large sum to expend on a play which the manager of the Lyceum had no intention of using again.

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[1] Dutton Cook.

"Othello" was only acted on three nights a week—Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays—"The Cup" and "The Belle's Stratagem" being played on the other evenings. The charge for seats in the higher-priced parts of the house were raised for the Booth engagement—stalls to £1 1s., dress-circle to 10s.; and private boxes from £1 2s. to £5 5s. Irving kept to the ordinary prices for the rest of the house—upper-circle, 4s.; amphitheatre, 2s. 6d.; pit, 2s.; and gallery, 1s. The financial result of the twenty-two performances of "Othello" was enormous. The engagement came to an end on Saturday, 11th June—Othello being acted by Irving, Iago by Booth. On that night, Booth addressed the audience as follows: "It is, for me, a strange sensation to speak any other words than those set down for me. Yet I feel that I cannot let an occasion like the present pass without breaking the silence. It is a pleasant duty to acknowledge to you the gratification it has been to me to see nightly such splendid audiences as have here assembled. I feel that I owe you a debt of gratitude for your appreciation of my efforts to please you. My visit to the Lyceum has been an uninterrupted pleasure. I have to thank my friend, Mr. Irving, for his generous hospitality, and the talented lady with whom I have had the honour of playing, for her pleasant companionship and kind assistance. Indeed, to all on the stage, and all associated with the Lyceum Theatre, my best thanks, for the courtesy and consideration which I have received, are due, and are most heartily tendered. Believe me, the kind and generous treatment I have received from the gentlemen of the press, and from all with whom I have been associated during this engagement, and the generous reception I have met with at your hands, must ever be among the pleasantest recollections of my long professional career. I hope to have the pleasure of appearing before you again, at no distant day. In the meantime, I thank you most heartily, and bid you, for the present, adieu."

Thus terminated a memorable and happy interlude in the lives of the two actors. With Booth, the impression of Irving's chivalry was ever present. On 14th April, 1884, when Irving was on the eve of completing the first of his many triumphal tours in America, Booth gave him a breakfast in New York—at Delmonico's, then the chief restaurant of that city. There were no set speeches, but Booth took the opportunity of expressing his old indebtedness to his brother player: "You all know that I went to another theatre in London, and that I was a big failure, though some newspapers on my side of the water had said that I would make Henry Irving and the other English actors sit up. Well, I didn't make them sit up. Yes, I was a big failure. But what happened then? Henry Irving invites me to act at his theatre and makes me share the success that he has well earned. He changes my big failure into a success. What can I say about such generosity? Was the like of it ever seen before? I am left without words. Friend Irving, I have no words to thank you." Such a simple and beautiful tribute from one great actor to another does not call for any comment. It silences, at once and for ever, the malicious charge of interested motive. When Booth died, one of the very first messages of sympathy received in New York—certainly the first from England—was the following cable dispatch :—

"LONDON, *8th June*, 1893.

"MY DEAR WINTER,—I am grieved beyond measure at the sad news of poor dear Booth's death. The world is poorer to-day by a great and true man. All love.

"HENRY IRVING."

The remaining six weeks of the summer season of 1880 were devoted to revivals of various Lyceum successes. "Hamlet" took pride of place with nineteen performances, then came "The Merchant of Venice" with seven representations. "The Bells" was played four times, "Charles the First" and "Eugene Aram" twice. The evening of Wednesday, 15th June, was devoted to the benefit of Miss Ellen Terry. On this occasion, "Othello" was played for the last time, "Mr. Booth having most kindly offered his services on this his last appearance at the Lyceum"— he was the Othello to Irving's Iago; and ordinary prices were charged. The last night of the season, Saturday, 23rd July, was set aside for "Mr. Irving's benefit," "The Bells" being the chief attraction. Irving's faithful friend, J. L. Toole, assisted by appearing in "The Birthplace of Podgers," a farce in which he had first acted, on the same stage, on 6th March, 1858. The well-known scene in which Modus abandons Ovid's "Art of Love" for the more efficacious teaching of Helen, put a new complexion on this episode from "The Hunchback". For Miss Ellen Terry was a Helen "who wooed her student cousin with enchanting grace and coquetry," and Henry Irving was a Modus who, "with infinite variety and humour, realised that happy condition when with 'a touch, a kiss, the charm was snapt!'" The-actor manager's speech, a long one, contained some happy expressions in regard to the interest and success of the season which had been so fruitful in good-will. Having reviewed the salient features of the previous nine months, he paid a graceful compliment to Edwin Booth, "my friend and fellow artist. Of Mr. Booth's great qualities as an actor you have had no scanty proof, for, after representing at the Princess's Theatre with singular ability many of the leading characters in the Shakespearean drama, Mr. Booth received here a nightly demonstration of enthusiasm which more than confirmed the great impression he had already made on the public, and which was as gratifying to myself as it must have been to himself." He then refuted some idle rumours which had been circulated by mischievous people and announced certain impending structural alterations in the theatre. "I have now a painful announcement to make. During our five months' absence the theatre will be closed. This, as you may imagine, will entail a very heavy expense, I regret to say, and I am sure I shall have your sincere sympathy in my affliction, when I state that I am going to make that expense still heavier by improving the ventilation, increasing your comfort in other ways, and by enlarging some parts of the house especially the pit ('Bravo!' and cheers)—I knew that statement would move you to tears (laughter.) No doubt you are aware that amongst the playful little fables about myself, which some worthy people with a good deal of spare time are constantly circulating, was the story that I had lately purchased the freehold, or leasehold, or goodness knows what, of the Lyceum, for a hundred thousand pounds, fifty thousand pounds, anything you please (laughter). Some persons improved upon this, and said the theatre had been presented to me. I have had no such good or evil fortune (a laugh). I have not given a hundred thousand pounds, because I don't possess it; and I have not paid fifty thousand pounds, for a somewhat similar reason. But what has happened is this: I have obtained a lengthened lease of the Lyceum; and through the excellent and friendly feeling which exists between the owner of this property, Mr. Arnold, and myself, I have the lease under most favourable conditions, which will enable me in a very short time to make some important changes. I shall shortly have the lease of four houses adjoining this theatre, and the long-desired opportunity of greatly improving the entrance, exits, and frontage of the house, not forgetting that region which is my own immediate realm—

namely, behind the scenes. I cannot tell you how delighted I am at this welcome prospect of increasing your comfort and making the Lyceum in every way worthy of your patronage."

He then announced that his next Shakespearean venture would be "Romeo and Juliet," to be followed in due course by "Coriolanus". "But now, ladies and gentlemen," he concluded, "I must say farewell. In all places and on all occasions, I shall ever be sensible of my lasting debt to my loyal and good friends, whom I am proud to think I have grappled to me with 'hoops of steel'." During the season thus brought to a felicitous end, he had improved the exit from the stalls by making a door communicating with the pit entrance, by means of which there was a direct exit, on the stalls level, to the Strand.

His labours for this period, arduous as they had been, were not yet over. He had to pay the penalty of fame by taking the chair at the thirty-sixth anniversary festival of the Royal General Theatrical Fund, on Friday evening, 29th July, at the Freemasons' Tavern. He had performed a similar office some six years previously. He was in sarcastic vein, and while upholding the dignity of his profession, he managed to make more than one "palpable hit". Having made some pointed allusions to the "flowers of rhetoric" of his predecessors in the chair, he said: "We do not make our appeal with 'bated breath and whispering humbleness'. The actor contributes so much to the general gaiety, gives such a zest to true and honest pleasure, lightens so many hearts often when his own is heavy, that when he is old, past work, infirm, and unfortunate, he has an undoubted title to the brotherly and sisterly kindness of all whom he has again and again sent away from the play refreshed, invigorated, instructed, or amused (cheers). But, then, it is said actors would not want if they were not so improvident. Improvidence, if you please, is 'the badge of all our tribe': we are the most careless, spendthrift, happy-go-lucky people on the face of the earth. Some persons are kind enough to say, by way of extenuation, that we are not responsible beings—that we live in a sort of fairyland—that we get so demoralised by pasteboard goblets and property jewellery, that we cannot enter into the realities of life. Of course, no actor was ever known to educate his children, or toil, not only for his own, but for a comrade's daily bread, or show a proud reluctance to appeal for help when overwhelmed with sickness and misfortune! Ah! ladies and gentlemen, judge us by the standard of common humanity, and if one of us ends his career after providing for everybody but himself, and if a chorus of charitable people who, perhaps, never gave a sixpence in their lives cry, 'Oh, the improvidence of these actors!' we simply answer that there is as much integrity, prudence, steady endeavour, and self-respect in our profession as the world ever heard of—as there is in any other section of the community. Now, the General Theatrical Fund holds out to all who put by but a small amount each year a provision against poverty, and, more than that, ensures them against vicissitudes arising from ill-health or accident, and I think few funds are better or more economically managed. There are no superfluous expenses, no little dinners for the gentlemen of the committee—no extravagant outlay on reams of paper never used, and stacks of quill pens supplying the treasurer with toothpicks; and, above all, no baronial halls for officials to kick their heels in, and for poor recipients of the fund to spend their days in exchanging reminiscences of the legitimate drama before it began to decline." In contrasting the salaries of actors with those paid in earlier days, he brought in a little reminiscence of his engagement at the St. James's Theatre in 1866. "Then your leading man might be receiving the modest emolument of £2 2s. per week, with the necessity of providing himself with hats, shoes, tights, and Heaven knows what. Many of us present know all about that; but now, forsooth, many a dashing young spark, aping a society drawl and possessing a few well-cut suits of clothes, may obtain his ten guineas (they always ask guineas) or more a week, as a representative of what is called society drama. Why, not fifteen years ago, when I made what was really my first appearance in London at a well-known theatre, I was engaged as a leading actor and stage manager at a salary of £7 per week. I tried for guineas, and they would not give it. Well, I was content, and so was my manager; but I firmly believe now, if I were to apply to any London manager for a similar position, that he would give me double that money. Things have so altered." In conclusion, he reverted to the influence exercised by the stage: "But before I sit down I would draw your attention to the extraordinary influence which the stage has upon society at large, and remembering this, I would, upon this ground alone, seek your support for such a society as this. In the practice of our art we win if we can—if we fail we have 'only our shame and the odd hits'—and whether we fail or not, the breath of applause or the murmurs of censure, are alike shortlived, and our longest triumphs are almost as brief as either. Our lives are fraught with many temptations, and should be solaced by the thoughtfulness, brightened by the encouragement, and softened by the liberal estimation of the public; for we actors have in charge a trust and a deposit of enormous value, such as no dead hand can treasure. The living voice, the vivid action, the tremulous passion, the animated gesture, the subtle and variously placed suggestion of character and meaning—these alone can make Shakespeare to your children what Shakespeare is to you. Such is our birthright, and such is yours."

In replying to the toast of his health—proposed by J. L. Toole—he defended himself from the charge of not slavishly following tradition in his acting. "I am very grateful," he said, "for the cordiality with which you have received this toast, and for the earnest words of my old friend who has proposed it. I only hope that one-half of the pleasant things he has said about me may be true. Ladies and gentlemen, I make no claim upon your consideration, except that of one who, whatever the results, has, at all events, laboured earnestly for his art. Mistakes may have been made—none of us can hope to avoid them altogether—but there has, I trust, been no unworthy aim—nothing of which any lover of the English stage need be ashamed. There is a charge, to which I suppose I must plead guilty—and that is, that I have not in everything shown an absolute deference to tradition. I do not know that there is any special reason that a man should boast that he has done his work in what he honestly believes to be the right way. But about tradition I venture to say this—that it was all very well for those who invented it, but is simply injurious to those who merely imitate it (cheers). If a conception is not part of a man's own brain—if it is not the impulse of his own creative faculty—then it cannot bear that stamp of individuality without which there can be no true art (hear, hear). Michael Angelo and Raphael may vary in their conception of the character they so loved to paint, as a Garrick and a Kean in their conception of Hamlet or Macbeth. It is difficult at all times to struggle against the idea some people have of the way in which Shakespeare's tragedy ought to be represented. If you do not assume a ponderous manner, and let even your whispers be like muttered thunder, you are said to be reducing poetry to the level of commonplace conversation. I think Shakespeare has himself given us definite instructions on this point; and if the actor only learns to hold the mirror up to nature, he may be assured that the great purpose of playing is accomplished. I do not lay the flattering unction to my soul that I have done this. I am an eccentric creature, who has somehow stumbled into the dramatic profession, to which I have clung with mistaken tenacity for twenty-five years; but I do my best to afford a little entertainment to the public, and I shall hold on as long as the great English public care to come and see me."

Henry Irving presided over the anniversary dinner on behalf of the Royal General Theatrical Fund on four occasions: 1st July, 1875; 29th July, 1881; 29th May, 1884; and 31st May, 1894. On the second occasion, the subscription list, which included one hundred guineas from Queen Victoria and a hundred pounds from Mr. George Rignold, amounted to £1,100.

CHAPTER XX.

5th September, 1881—June, 1882.

A triumphal tour—Enormous receipts—Manchester extols Irving's Shylock—An address in Edinburgh—"The Stage as It Is"—Alterations at the Lyceum—"Mr. Irving is above advertising himself"—Amusing skit in *Punch*—The re-opening of the Lyceum—Great demand for seats—The revival of "Two Roses"—Irving's Digby Grant "had improved with keeping"—"Romeo and Juliet" revived—Irving's Preface and restorations—The Prince and Princess of Wales present on the first night—Irving acts Shylock at the Savoy Theatre—The 100th night of "Romeo and Juliet"—Lord Lytton's tribute.

THERE was but little time for rest between the closing of the London season and the opening of a provincial campaign of the most elaborate nature that was ever carried out. But Irving spent a few days in Edinburgh and at Oban in the early part of August. The tour of the country began, at the Grand Theatre, Leeds, on 5th September; Miss Ellen Terry, Mr. Terriss, Mr. Howe, Mr. Mead, and all the other members of the company appeared, and the various plays were mounted in exactly the same style as at the Lyceum. From Leeds, Irving went in turn to Liverpool—where he played for three weeks—Dublin, Belfast, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Manchester, Birmingham, and Bristol. "Hamlet" and "The Merchant of Venice" proved extremely popular. The tour ended on 17th December, with the ninety-second performance. Irving's share of the receipts—two-thirds of the takings—amounted to the sum of £23,666 5s. 6d.

But he had other successes than monetary ones. There was not a single jarring note in the enthusiasm with which he was greeted, and the press was lavish and voluminous in his praise. One brief quotation from the many columns of criticism must suffice as an example of the most discriminating of the great number of articles which greeted him in the various towns. He may well have been gratified by the attitude of the *Manchester Guardian* in reference to the opening of his twelve nights' engagement at the Prince's Theatre on 21st November, for that paper has always prided itself on upholding the right of Manchester to the same artistic standard as that of London or Paris. It began its criticism by a just recognition of the general completeness of Irving's productions, and concluded its observations on this head by observing that "Mr. Irving's present visit will set an admirable precedent. The city in which he first showed what was in him will thus have reason to be grateful to him, and we hope and think that the results of his present visit will show that, in its appreciation of good and honest art, Manchester is in no way behind Glasgow and Edinburgh"—where his performances in the previous four weeks had elicited unbounded applause on all sides. In a clever analysis of the impersonation of Shylock, it rightly denoted one of the great merits of this particular interpretation, as well as one of the chief points in all Irving's work—his intellectuality. "A good performance of Shylock," said the *Guardian*, "must be subtle and must be intellectual whatever else it is or is not, and in subtlety and intelligence Mr. Irving's severest critics have never pretended that he was deficient. Shylock's immense intellectual superiority is one of the chief notes of his character, and nothing could have been finer than the way in which Mr. Irving conveyed this in such test passages as those in which Shylock speaks of Antonio's 'low simplicity,' of 'his Christian courtesy,' of 'the fool that lent out money gratis,' or than the supreme contempt with which he treated the butterfly Gratiano in the trial scene." It gave him unqualified praise for his treatment of this side of the character, and it was equally in his favour in regard to the actor's general conception of the motives which sway Shylock against Antonio—the main one being, of course, hatred. Quoting part of Shylock's speech in reference to Antonio:—

So I can give no reason, nor I will not,
More than a lodg'd hate and a certain loathing
I bear Antonio—

it said that "this last word of 'loathing,' uttered by Mr. Irving as it were from the depths of his soul, is the right word. Shylock's hatred is not calculating enmity for definite losses incurred through Antonio, any more than it is an impersonal and almost magnanimous desire to be revenged on the oppressor of his race. Both these elements enter into his feeling, but it is deeper lodged than any of them. The fierce passion which shakes Shylock in the frenzied scene after he has heard of Jessica's disappearance and his utter remorselessness in the trial scene are consistent only with a personal hatred pushed almost to the verge of monomania. It is his success in rendering these which makes Mr. Irving's performance one of the truest, as well as the grimmest things he has ever done."

From a Dublin paper in 1881.

1. The Effect on a Dublin Audience of "The Bells".
2. The Effect on the Same Audience of "The Belle's Stratagem".

(Irving played in both pieces on the same evening.)

The same critic—W. T. Arnold—gave an admirable description of Irving's treatment in Manchester, which differed somewhat from his original playing of it, of the great scene of the denunciation to Tubal. He quoted G. H. Lewes in reference to Macready's acting: "Shylock has to come on in a state of intense rage and grief at the flight of his daughter. Now it is obviously a great trial for the actor 'to strike twelve at once'. He is one moment calm in the green-room, and the next he has to appear on the stage with his whole nature in an uproar. Unless he has a very mobile temperament, quick as flame, he cannot begin this scene at the proper state of white heat. Accordingly, we see actors come bawling and gesticulating, but leaving us unmoved because they are not moved themselves. Macready, it is said, used to spend some minutes behind the scenes, lashing himself into an imaginative rage by cursing sotto voce, and shaking violently a ladder fixed against a wall. To bystanders the effect must have been ludicrous. But to the audience the actor presented himself as one really agitated." Continuing its criticism, the *Guardian* remarked: "We do not know whether Mr. Irving is compelled to have recourse to a similar preparation, but he certainly kindles very rapidly into flame. The scene is almost painful—there is, indeed, something animal in the Jew's entire loss of self-control, and Mr. Irving spares us no detail of the wild eyes, wolfish teeth, and foaming mouth—but it is consummately played, and its repulsiveness is not more than is necessary to express Mr. Irving's conception of the character. We notice with some satisfaction that in this scene Mr. Irving delivers the famous words, 'I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys,' differently from the manner in which he delivered them at the Lyceum two years ago. He then made them grotesque, but they are said in all seriousness by Shylock, and should be so said by the actor." The critic had only the highest praise for Irving's acting in the trial scene. Another critic, writing in the same paper eighteen years later, began his article with the words: "Sir Henry Irving's Shylock is one of the very finest of his accomplishments—a performance full of beauty, wrought with perfect discretion, infinitely stimulating and impressive ".

This triumphant tour was also the means of enabling Irving to deliver one of the most powerful addresses that he gave throughout his career in the cause that he had so deeply at heart. On the afternoon of 8th November he read the opening address of the winter session of the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution, in the Music Hall of the Scottish capital, the meeting being presided over by Sir Alexander Grant. He chose "The Stage as It Is" for his subject. The address is too long for free quotation; moreover, it was widely printed in the papers and also published in pamphlet form. Again, in 1893, it was the first in the volume of four addresses by Henry Irving then issued. He began the reading of his paper by noting that the comparative neglect of the theatre —"fortunately there is less of this than there used to be," he said—arose partly from intellectual superciliousness, partly from timidity as to moral contamination. To boast of being able to appreciate Shakespeare more in reading him than in seeing him acted used to be a common method of affecting special intellectuality. But the pitiful delusion has mostly died out. It conferred a cheap badge of superiority on those who entertained it. It seemed to each of them an inexpensive opportunity of worshipping himself on a pedestal. But what did it amount to? It was little more than a conceited and featherheaded assumption that an unprepared reader, whose mind is usually full of far other things, will see on the instant all that has been developed in hundreds of years by the members of a studious and enthusiastic profession. Irving's own conviction was that there are few characters or passages of our great dramatists which will not repay original study. But at least, he continued, "we must recognise the vast advantages with which a practised actor, impregnated by the associations of his life and by study—with all the practical and critical skill of his profession up to the date at which he appears—whether he adopts or rejects tradition, addresses himself to the interpretation of any great character, even if he have no originality whatever. There is something still more than this, however, in acting. Everyone who has the smallest histrionic gift has a natural dramatic fertility; so that as soon as he knows the author's text and obtains self-possession, and feels at home in a part without being too familiar with it, the mere automatic action of rehearsing and playing it at once begins to place the author in new lights and to give the personage being played an individuality partly independent of, and yet consistent with, and rendering more powerfully visible, the dramatist's conception. It is the vast power a good actor has in this way which has led the French to speak of creating a part when they mean its being first played; and French authors are so conscious of the extent and value of this co-operation of actors with them that they have never objected to the phrase, but, on the contrary, are uniformly lavish in their homage to the artists who have created on the boards the parts which they themselves had created on paper." He went on to observe that while there is but one Shakespeare, and there are but comparatively few dramatists sufficiently classic to be read with close attention, there is a great deal of average dramatic work excellently suited for representation. From this the public derive pleasure as well as instruction and mental stimulus. So it is plain that if, because Shakespeare is good reading, people were to give the cold shoulder to the theatre, the world would lose all the vast advantage which comes to it through the dramatic faculty in forms not rising to essentially literary excellence. As to the fear of moral contamination, the theatre of fifty years before did sometimes need reforming in the audience part of the house. "But it has been reformed; and if there is moral contamination from what is performed on the stage, so there is from books, so there may be at lawn tennis, clubs, and dances. But do we, therefore, bury ourselves? The theatre, as a whole, is never below the average moral sense of the time; and this is truer now than ever it was before. The stage is no longer a mere appendage of Court-life, but the property of the educated people. It must satisfy them or pine in neglect. This being so, the stage is no longer proscribed. Its members are no longer pariahs in society." Was his own appearance there not a sign of that? He felt his position as a representative one, and it marked an epoch in the estimation in which the art he loved was held by the British world. Referring to the lament that there were no schools for actors, he said the complaint was idle. Practice was their school. They should have a sincere and absorbing sympathy with all that is good, and great, and inspiring. He went on to dwell on the adaptability of the theatre to the prevailing wants and taste of the time, and concluded with a fine peroration picturing the actor's pleasure in abandoning himself to his author's "grandest flights of thought and noblest bursts of emotional enthusiasm ".

During the absence from London of the actor-manager, the theatre had been in the hands of an army of workpeople, and extensive alterations had been made for the benefit of the public, and, incidentally, the holding capacity of the house had been increased very considerably. By taking in a corridor at the back of the dress-circle, sixty or seventy new seats were added to that part of the house, while, by bringing a saloon within the area of the pit, room—with a direct view of the stage—was obtained for about two hundred more persons. Nor was he unmindful of his friends up aloft. An objectionable arch was removed from the gallery so that the stage could be seen clearly from the highest line of seats. The ventilation of this part of the theatre was improved greatly, and the gallery seats were cushioned. Striking alterations were made in regard to entrances and means of egress. The main staircase, which had previously sufficed for the entire audience, except the pit and gallery, was increased in width from eight to eighteen feet. The pit entrance was widened, and, instead of taking an awkward turn, looked directly towards the Strand on the level of the street. From the proscenium arch up to the entire height of the roof above the stage, concrete took the place of timber. The pit was entirely re-seated, and various other minor alterations tended to the comfort of the audience.

He had received tremendous advertisement in London from the unprecedented success of his provincial tour, and by reason of the structural alterations at the Lyceum. During his absence, he also obtained an indirect advertisement through an action for libel brought by Clement Scott. During the hearing of the case, the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Coleridge of the silvery voice, made a statement which gave rise to much amusing comment. "Mr. Irving is above advertising himself," he said. This suggested to *Punch* a brief but entertaining article headed "Mr. Irving on Himself". Taking as its text the dictum of Lord Coleridge, it remarked:—

"Isn't he? Haven't we seen two or three advertisements *per diem* lately about the re-opening of the Lyceum? And if the following manifesto has not already appeared in a morning paper, that's not his fault:—

"TO THE NATION.—On the return of Mr. IRVING to the Lyceum Theatre, it is felt to be a public duty to briefly chronicle the brilliant and unprecedented result of his triumphal march through the provinces. An illuminated balance-sheet, with gilt edges, will be handed, *free of charge*, to every visitor at the Lyceum Theatre; the no-fee system being, it is hoped, strictly adhered to on the part of the public."

"A leading Belfast newspaper says:—

"'Mr. IRVING is the greatest Actor that has ever trod the boards, judged by the standpoint of his profits, by the side of which the most sublime efforts of GARRICK, KEAN, KEMBLE, and RACHEL sink into insignificance. The three kingdoms have vied with each other in noble rivalry to do substantial homage to him who has undoubtedly placed himself at the head of that trade which he is never tired of upholding, and which—if persevering in the course he has recently taken—he will undoubtedly succeed in placing on a level with that of the enterprising Grocer and advertising Tea-dealer.

"'To illustrate the lavish nature of Mr. IRVING's genius we may mention the fact that two special trains are necessary in order to meet the requirements of travel—one train being set apart for the distinguished Tragedian himself, the other conveying the costumes, which are the most expensive that can be procured for the money, the scenery being designed by Royal Academicians at immense outlay, the company engaged to support their chief, the properties, and the Acting-manager, who may be described as the most courteous on the road.

"'Mr. IRVING will shortly return to the scene of his former triumphs—newly decorated and calculated to hold considerably more money. Bearing ever in mind that his motto that 'Art is to conceal artfulness,' Mr. IRVING hopes, by constant attention to business, to merit that support to which he is undoubtedly entitled. . . . We may add that for the above particulars we are indebted to the courtesy of the great Tragedian's Acting-manager himself.'

"NOTICE.—A special staff has been told off to allot the seats for the opening night. Many thousands must necessarily be disappointed; but Mr. IRVING sincerely hopes that no block will cause any interruption of the coronetted carriage-traffic in the Strand.

"Mr. IRVING will do his very best to provide seats for everybody in the course of time, only they really *must* wait their turn. The Lyceum has been re-decorated and re-ceipted—no, re-seated,—only Mr. IRVING couldn't resist the allusion."

There was, of course, a huge demand for seats for "Two Roses," with which the Lyceum re-opened on Monday, 26th December. It was announced that tickets would be allotted according to priority of date of application; furthermore, "Mr. Irving regrets"—so ran the advertisement—"that it is not possible to place seats for such special occasions at the disposal of the various libraries". The latter statement was rendered necessary through the enormous prices which had been obtained by the "libraries" when the famous "society" beauty, Mrs. Langtry, made her first appearance on the stage at the Haymarket Theatre. This was just before the re-opening of the Lyceum, when three, four, and, so it was said, as much as ten guineas had been paid for a stall, in consequence of the majority of the seats having been bought in advance by the libraries. Irving did not play Digby Grant after this season, as the part was too small for him, and the play had lost its savour. Moreover, the comparisons between the members of the new cast and those of the original were not altogether in favour of the more modern players. A special engagement was made for this occasion in the person of David James who, after the first production, had acted "Our Mr. Jenkins" in succession to George Honey.

TWO ROSES.

Revived at the Lyceum, 26th December, 1881.

Mr. Digby Grant	Mr. Henry Irving.
Mr. Furnival	Mr. H. Howe.
Jack Wyatt	Mr. W. Terriss.
Caleb Deecie	Mr. G. Alexander.
Footman	Mr. Harbury.
Our Mr. Jenkins	Mr. David James.
Ida	Miss Helen Matthews.
Mrs. Cupps	Miss C. Ewell.
Our Mrs. Jenkins	Miss Pauncefort.
Lottie	Miss Winifred Emery.

Act I., Scene. Mr. Digby Grant's Cottage. Act II., Scene. Jack Wyatt's Lodgings. Act III., Scene. Vassalwick Grange.

CAST OF THE FIRST PRODUCTION, AT THE VAUDEVILLE, 4TH JUNE, 1870.

Mr. Digby Grant	Mr. Henry Irving.
Jack Wyatt	Mr. H. J. Montague.
Caleb Deecie	Mr. Thomas Thorne.
Mr. Jenkins	Mr. George Honey.
Mr. Furnival	Mr. W. H. Stephens.
Lottie	Miss Amy Fawsitt.
Ida	Miss A. Newton.
Mrs. Cupps	Miss Phillips.
Mrs. Jenkins	Miss T. Lavis.

Mr. George Alexander made his first appearance on the London stage as the blind Caleb Deecie, and William Terriss was the Jack Wyatt. The "roses," Lottie and Ida, were Miss Winifred Emery and Miss Helen Mathews, and Mr. Howe, Miss Pauncefort, and Miss C. Ewell completed the cast. The *Times* said that the impersonation of Digby Grant "had improved with keeping. The mannerisms of which we have heard so much in Mr. Irving's acting obtruded themselves certainly in the opening scene, but under the strong, commanding individuality of the actor they seemed to become merged in the idiosyncrasies of the 'broken gentleman' who affects theatrical airs with his washerwoman, and who sponges shamelessly on his daughter's suitor. In the subsequent acts they were not seen at all, or seen only as a part and parcel of the character itself. The transitions from poverty to affluence and again from affluence to poverty in Digby Grant's circumstances were managed by the actor with rare skill: in the offensively purse-proud soi-disant 'gentleman' who has paid off all his old friends with a 'little cheque,' and who preaches down his daughter's heart with his selfish and worldly ideas, there was the same innate baseness as before, but baseness gilded and subdued by wealthy surroundings. The character was consistent throughout: it had, too, all the indefinable touches of tone, gesture, look which only genius supplies; and, to descend to a detail which is perhaps more important than it seems, Mr. Irving's make-up, not so much in the character of the broken gentleman, as in that of the pretentious 'swell,' was singularly true and perfect." Albery's comedy was preceded by Planché's comedietta, "The Captain of the Watch," acted by Terriss, Miss Louisa Payne, Miss Helen Mathews, and others. This was the last time that the old-fashioned farce was seen at the Lyceum as part of the ordinary bill. "Two Roses" was played until 3rd March, sixty performances being given. The theatre was then closed for the final rehearsals of "Romeo and Juliet."

In his speech to the audience on the first night of the revival of "Two Roses," Irving declared that "Romeo and Juliet" was ready for production whenever it was required. And the revival was well in hand at that time. But the intervening weeks were put to good use, and when, on Wednesday, 8th March, 1882, the revival of Shakespeare's immortal love tragedy took place, the Lyceum presented a series of poetical and beautiful pictures such as the stage had not previously seen. Irving felt his own limitations and he knew quite well that he could not be the love-sick, ardent Romeo any more than Miss Ellen Terry could be the passionate Italian girl. The history of the stage teems with the attempts of ladies of uncertain age—most of whom were old enough to be mothers, while some might have been grandmothers, had they been ordinary domestic persons!—to play Juliet, and there was no reason why a man of forty-four should not have been a fairly successful lover. The "too old at forty" fetish was unknown to the philosophy of a quarter of a century ago. Irving could not be a boy-Romeo, but he meant to capture the public. And he did so. In the first place, he devoted himself to the text, and he abolished certain excrescences which had grown upon the play. He destroyed these barnacles unmercifully and presented the tragedy in its pristine purity. In his acting edition, which was published simultaneously with his production, he announced his intention: "I have availed myself of every resource at my command to illustrate without intrusion"—mark these words, "without intrusion"—"the Italian warmth, life, and romance of this enthralling love-story. Such changes as have been made from the ordinary manner of presentation are, I think, justified by the fuller development of our present stage, of the advantages of which the Poet would, doubtless, have freely availed himself had his own opportunities been brought up to the level of our time." In regard to the arrangement of the text, he stated that he had "endeavoured to retain all that was compatible with the presentation of the play within a reasonable time," and he acknowledged his indebtedness to the Variorum of Furness and the editions of Dyce and Singer. The most important of his restorations was "that of Romeo's unrequited love for Rosaline, omitted amongst other things in Garrick's Georgian version. Its value can hardly be over-appreciated, since Shakespeare has carefully worked out this first baseless love of 'Romeo' as a palpable evidence of the subjective nature of the man and his passion." The conclusion to his Preface was, as usual when he spoke of his own efforts, extremely modest: "In securing for the production of this play the co-operation and assistance of some of the distinguished representatives of our time of the various Arts I have been most fortunate; and although the art of the actor must ever fail to realize the ideal of the Poet, still we hope that suggestions in the interpretation of the play may be offered on which the mind may dwell with pleasure and profit, and which may justify our attempt."

ROMEO AND JULIET.

Revived at the Lyceum, 8th March, 1882.

Romeo - - - - -	Mr. Henry Irving.
Mercutio - - - -	Mr. William Terriss.
Tybalt - - - - -	Mr. Charles Glenney.
Paris - - - - -	Mr. George Alexander.
Capulet - - - - -	Mr. Howe.
Montague - - - -	Mr. Harbury.
Friar Laurence - - -	Mr. Fernandez.
Apothecary - - - -	Mr. Mead.
Prince Escalus - - -	Mr. Tyars.
Benvolio - - - -	Mr. Child.
Gregory - - - -	Mr. Carter.
Sampson - - - - -	Mr. Archer.
Abraham - - - -	Mr. Louther.
Balthasar - - - -	Mr. Hudson.
Peter - - - - -	Mr. Andrews.
Friar John - - - -	Mr. Black.
Citizen - - - - -	Mr. Harwood.
Chorus - - - - -	Mr. Howard Russell.
Page - - - - -	Miss Kate Brown.
Nurse - - - - -	Mrs. Stirling.
Lady Montague - - -	Miss H. Matthews.
Lady Capulet - - -	Miss L. Payne.
Juliet - - - - -	Miss Ellen Terry.

Act I., Scene 1. Verona—The Market Place; Scene 2. Verona—Loggia of Capulet's House; Scene 3. Verona—Before Capulet's House; Scene 4. A Hall in Capulet's House. Act II., Scene 1. Verona—Wall of Capulet's Garden; Scene 2. Verona—The Garden; Scene 3. Verona—The Monastery; Scene 4. Verona—Outside the City; Scene 5. Verona—Terrace of Capulet's Garden; Scene 6. Verona—The Cloisters. Act III., Scene 1. Verona—A Public Place; Scene 2. Verona — The Loggia; Scene 3. Verona—A Secret Place in the Monastery; Scene 4. Verona —Capulet's House; Scene 5. Verona—Juliet's Chamber. Act IV., Scene 1. Verona—The Friar's Cell; Scene 2. Verona—Juliet's Chamber (Night); Scene 3. Verona—The Same (Morning). Act V., Scene 1. Mantua—A Street; Scene 2. Verona—The Friar's Cell; Scene 3. Verona—Churchyard with the Tomb of the Capulets; Scene 4. Verona—The Tomb.

The interest taken in the revival was intense. All ranks of playgoers were eager to see the new "Romeo" and the first night audience was headed by the Prince and Princess of Wales (Edward VII. and Queen Alexandra), and the rest of the distinguished company included the Earl of Lytton, the Duke and Duchess of Wellington, the Countess of Breadalbane, Lord and Lady Londesborough, the Earl of Fife, the Lord and Lady Mayoress of London, Sir Frederick and Lady Pollock, Sir Dighton Probyn, Admiral Sir W. Hewitt, Sir Julius and Lady Benedict, Baron Ferdinand Rothschild, and the Baroness Burdett-Coutts. "The superb character of the revival," said the *Daily Telegraph*, "cannot be sufficiently appreciated at a single inspection. The mind, anxious to take in so much, inevitably passes over many instances of colour and arrangement. Such scenes as these—the outside of Capulet's house lighted for the ball, the sunny pictures of Verona in summer, the marriage chant to Juliet changed into a death dirge, the old, lonely street in Mantua, where the Apothecary dwells, the wondrous solid tomb of the Capulets—are as worthy of close and renewed study as are the pictures in a gallery of paintings." These were, in a pictorial sense, the lesser things of the revival. The ball-room scene of the first act was one of the most sumptuous stage pictures ever presented. And the fight between the representatives of the Montagues and the Capulets in the Market Place of Verona proved that Henry Irving had nothing to learn from the players of Saxe-Meinengen, whose appearance at Drury Lane in the previous year had drawn attention to their dexterous handling of stage-crowds. In the last act, the tomb scene was most impressive. The Lyceum Romeo dragged the body of the murdered Paris down the steps at the back of the stage—the dim light and the general effect of distance were most weird and impressive. Irving's best scenes were Romeo's fight with Tybalt, his passionate acting when Romeo learns of his banishment, and the scene with the Apothecary. The last was a marvellous bit of acting, and will be remembered as a fine, artistic touch. In the ability to express profound melancholy and to indicate coming doom, Irving has had no rival

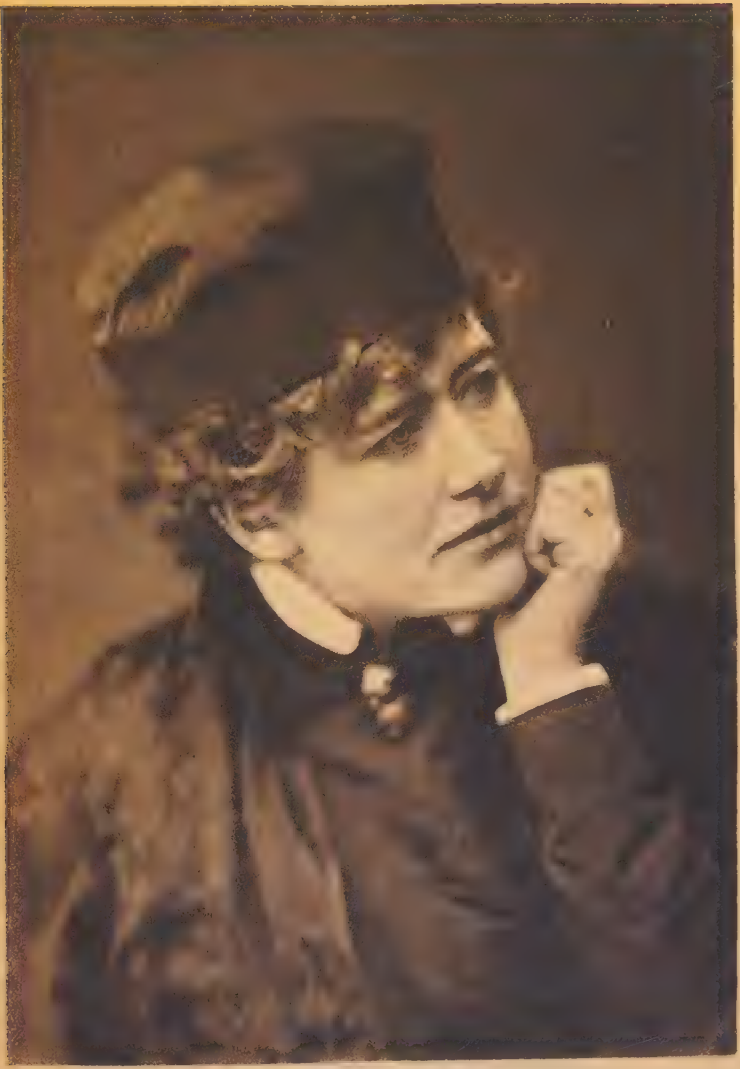

Photo: Lock and Whitfield, London.

MISS ELLEN TERRY AS PORTIA.

on the stage. This one scene in Irving's hands was worth any number of vigorous, "manly" Romeos prancing about Juliet's garden and offering the salutation of rhapsody to the love-lorn lady on the balcony. By the same rule, Miss Ellen Terry was not an "ideal" Juliet—old playgoers could not banish memories of Adelaide Neilson and Stella Colas—but she had the charm of youth and her own indefinable grace and beauty. Her best scenes were those with the Nurse. That in which the news of Romeo's impending visit to the Friar's cell is delayed, and, finally, conveyed to Juliet, was exquisitely acted. Its matchless charm is an abiding memory. Miss Terry had an admirable representative of the Nurse to assist her in the late Mrs. Stirling. Other able players who gave invaluable aid to the production were the late Henry Howe, Mr. James Fernandez, William Terriss as Mercutio, and Thomas Mead as the Apothecary. In short, generally speaking, the tragedy has never had so superb a cast. For the chorus, there was Mr. Howard Russell, a good actor of the "old school," who is still before the public. Special music was composed by Sir Julius Benedict, the costumes were designed by an artist who was exceedingly clever in such matters, the late Alfred Thompson, while Mr. Hawes Craven, Mr. Walter Hann, and the late William Telbin were chiefly responsible for the scenery.

On the first night of the revival, the representative of Romeo announced that the tragedy would be played at the Lyceum "until further notice". Some months passed ere that notice was given. In the meantime, some interesting events came to pass. First of all, on the afternoon of Wednesday, 21st June, Miss Florence Terry took her farewell of the stage, in view of her approaching marriage and retirement. The Savoy Theatre was selected for this leave-taking, and on its stage Henry Irving appeared as Shylock in the Trial scene. Miss Ellen Terry was Portia, Miss Florence Terry the Nerissa, and Miss Marion Terry added to the interest of the occasion—and the incongruity of the scene!—by appearing as the Clerk of the Court. The hundredth night of "Romeo and Juliet" followed hard upon this—24th June being the exact date. The occasion was celebrated by a banquet on the stage of the Lyceum which, for the time being, was turned into a festive hall, adorned with tapestry and flowers. A grove of artificial greenery divided the stage from the auditorium, where, in the "dim, religious light," music was played at intervals. The Earl of Lytton ("Owen Meredith," 1831-1891), presided over a company of over a hundred representatives of art, the drama, and literature. In giving the toast of the evening, he touched, most happily, upon some of the reasons for Irving's success with the Shakespearean drama, and he made a deep impression upon his audience as to the true sense of Irving's artistic mission. "In the course of his brilliant career as an actor," he said, "Mr. Irving has sustained many characters. In all of them he will be long and admirably remembered; but in none of them has he established a more general and permanent claim to our gratitude than in the character by which he is so worthily known to us as the illustrious successor of my lamented friend, the late Mr. Macready, in the beneficent task of restoring to the British stage its ancient and now prolific alliance with the literature and poetry of our country. Speaking here as the son of an English writer, who was not unconnected with the stage, and who, were he still living, would, I am sure, be worthily interested in the success of Mr. Irving's noble undertaking, and gratefully acknowledge, in all that tends to record and confirm such an alliance, the promise of a threefold benefit—a benefit to our national literature, because, without it, that literature would remain comparatively barren or undeveloped in one of the highest departments of imaginative writing—a benefit to our national stage, because without it the genius of our actors, when seeking opportunities for the expression of its highest powers in the performance of great parts and great plays, must remain dependent more or less upon the dramatic productions, either of former generations or foreign countries; and a benefit to our national society, because there is no surer test of the relative place to be assigned to any modern community in a state of social civilisation than the intellectual character of its public amusements; and in elevating these you exalt the whole community. Now I feel sure you will agree with me that no living English actor has done more in this direction than Mr. Irving; and he has done it not by sacrificing all other conditions of dramatic effect to the display of his own idiosyncrasy as an actor, but by associating his peculiar powers as an actor with a rarely cultivated and thoughtful study of that harmonious unity of dramatic impressions which is essential to the high order of dramatic performances. Mr. Irving's eminence as an actor needs from me no individual recognition. It has long ago been established, and in connection with its latest manifestation, it has been re-affirmed with enthusiasm by a popular verdict which supersedes all personal comment. But there is one characteristic of his talents which has, I think, been specially conducive to its popularity. It requires a great actor to perform a great part, just as it requires a great author to write one. But it requires, I think, from a great actor certain special and uncommon powers to enable him to throw the whole force of his mind creatively into every detail of a great play, giving to the pervading vital spirit of it an adequately complete, appropriate, and yet original embodiment. This peculiar quality of Mr. Irving's mind and management has been conspicuously revealed in his conception and production of the play, whose one hundredth performance at this theatre we celebrate to-night.

"Now, though 'Romeo and Juliet' is one of the most poetic, it is certainly one of the least dramatic, of Shakespeare's tragedies. To us its main charm and interest must always be poetic rather than dramatic. Even in the versification of it Shakespeare has adopted, as he has adopted in no other drama, forms peculiar to the early love-poetry of Italy and Provence. Its true dramatis personæ are not mere mortal Montagues and Capulets, they are those beautiful immortals, love and youth, in an ideal land of youth and love—and those delicate embodiments of a passionate romance Shakespeare has surrounded with a scenery and invested with an atmosphere of sensuous beauty. This atmosphere is the only medium through which we can view them in their true poetic perspective and right relation to that imaginary world in which alone they naturally breathe and move and have their being. But it is this subtle atmosphere of surrounding beauty which invariably and inevitably escapes in the ordinary stage performance of the play, and it is, I conceive, the surpassing merits of Mr. Irving's conception and treatment of the play to have restored to it, or rather to have given for the first time to its stage performance, the indefinable, pervading charm of what I can only call its natural poetic climate. In the production of this result he has successfully employed, no doubt, scenic effects, which attest a creative imagination of no common force and sweetness. But the result is by no means due to scenic effect alone. Did time allow, I think I could trace it through numerous details of singular delicacy to the unobtrusive and pervading influence of an original mind upon the whole arrangement and performance of the play, and we should indeed be ungrateful for the pleasure it has given us, if we forget, on this occasion, how largely that pleasure is due to the refined and graceful exercise of such charming talents as those which delighted us in the acting of Miss Terry and Mrs. Stirling, and to the general intelligence of all who have supported Mr. Irving in thus successfully carrying out his own brilliant conception of the play."

In his reply to this simple, direct, and truthful testimony to his achievements—an "appreciation" which was all the more gratifying since it was not mere empty eulogy—the actor-manager touched with a light hand upon the subject so dear to him—the stage—and created an impression of "rare intellectual sympathy". The harmony of the evening was increased by the proposal of the health of the Lord Mayor by George Augustus Sala in a speech in the happiest and most genial manner of that brilliant journalist.

CHAPTER XXI.

June, 1882—11th October, 1883.

Master Harry and Master Laurence Irving—The success of "Romeo and Juliet"—161 performances and a profit of £10,000—A reading of "Much Ado"—A remarkable speech—"Much Ado About Nothing" revived—Its wonderful success—212 consecutive performances and a profit of £26,000—An enthusiastic audience—Irving's valedictory speech—Some interesting figures—Farewell banquet in St. James's Hall—Lord Coleridge's eloquent tribute—Farewell visits to Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Liverpool—Speech at the Edinburgh Pen and Pencil Club—Farewell speech in Liverpool—Sails for America.

ANOTHER event occurred in June, 1882, which should be chronicled, inasmuch as it appertains to the personal history of the subject of this biography. On Friday, the 30th of that month, at the Duke of Wellington's Riding School, Knightsbridge, a "Grand Lilliputian Fancy Fair" was held, in aid of a charity, and the screen scene from "The School for Scandal" was given—amongst other entertainments—with the following cast:—

SIR PETER TEAZLE - - - -	Miss JOSEPHINE WEBLING.
JOSEPH SURFACE - - - -	Master HARRY IRVING.
CHARLES SURFACE - - - -	Master LAURENCE IRVING.
SERVANT - - - - - -	Master JOHN GARRETT.
LADY TEAZLE - - - - -	Miss PEGGY WEBLING.

The children, who had been trained by Mrs. Chippendale, acquitted themselves well in somewhat unfavourable circumstances, for there was an intolerable noise from the fair. Nevertheless, a discerning critic discovered that "the two juvenile sons of Mr. Henry Irving manifest a decided histrionic 'heredity' in their impersonations". It is interesting to think that while his children—they were then in their twelfth and eleventh years, respectively—were thus showing their hereditary talent, Henry Irving was in a brilliant and unassailable position. After many years of incessant hard work he had reached a period in his career which lasted in unshaken, steady success until health and strength could no longer stand against disasters which would have appalled the weak, but which left him still determined.

These days of "Romeo and Juliet" were happy ones and they ushered in still better times. One of the many people who have written biographies of the actor-manager says: "one feels anxious, in the interests of Irving, to pass over 'Romeo and Juliet' quickly". There is no need, however, for apology on this score. Romeo was not by any means Irving's best performance, any more than Juliet was Ellen Terry's highest achievement. But, in neither case, was there anything to be ashamed of; and the actor has not yet lived who was equally good in every character which he undertook. It was not a crime, as some people seem to think, for an actor—at the age of forty-four—to attempt to impersonate Romeo, even though he was lacking in the physical qualifications of the part. The public did not think so indifferently of the experiment, for "Romeo and Juliet" was played throughout the season—8th March to 29th July inclusive—and, on the re-opening of the Lyceum in September, it was again brought out and played until one hundred and sixty-one performances had been given, with only a break of five weeks for the necessary summer vacation. Moreover—and this should be noted—during the first five months of its run it drew £34,000 odd. On this sum, despite the enormous expenses—and no other manager ever had so heavy a payroll—there was a profit of £10,000. "Two Roses" brought in a balance to the good of more than £2,000, so that the net financial result of the eight months' season did not leave much cause for complaint. The sale of books of the Lyceum version of the immortal love tragedy realised over £400.

Not content with his duties to the public, Irving occasionally gave readings in private. One of the most notable of these appearances took place on 20th July at the residence of Sir Theodore and Lady Martin (Helen Faucit), 31 Onslow

Square. The programme on this interesting occasion was as follows :—

"MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING."

BEATRICE	Lady MARTIN.
HERO	Miss ROSINA FILIPPI.
URSULA	Miss STOKES.
BENEDICK	Mr. HENRY IRVING.
LEONATO	Rev. ALFRED AINGER.
ANTONIO	Sir THEODORE MARTIN.
CLAUDIO	Mr. TREVOR.
DON PEDRO	Mr. BENSON.
FRIAR	Mr. W. FARREN; Junr.

A few nights afterwards—on Saturday, 29th July—another memorable season ended at the Lyceum. The actor-manager, who now knew that he had the world at his feet, took occasion to rebuke some of the various people who were constantly attempting to teach him his own business. He was getting just a little tired of such impertinences—as they would certainly be considered if applied to any modern actor—but he did not give vent to indignation or vehemence. He was sure of his proud place with the public, so he resorted to that mild sarcasm in which he knew well how to indulge. The text of his speech is given in full on this occasion, as such an address, in his own words, proves how—even now, when he was at the zenith of his career—the yelping of the envious and the snarling at his success went on unceasingly. This is what he said : "The curtain has fallen on 'Romeo and Juliet' for the one hundred and thirtieth time, and I hope you will permit it on 2nd September, this day five weeks, to rise again upon the play presented to-night. I am told sometimes that I do wrong to inflict on you the tediousness of Shakespeare, an author whose works some of the wise judges of dramatic art assure us are rather dull and tiresome to a nineteenth-century audience. Perhaps Shakespeare would find some of us a little dull and tiresome, too ; but, be that as it may, I fear I shall continue in my misguided course as long as I meet with your support to warrant my perseverance ; and, for those who find his works dull and tedious, we shall be happy to put them on the free list when you are kind enough to leave room for them. I am glad to tell you that the season just past has realised nothing but success. We began with the 'Two Roses,' which you received with great favour, and which was played until the production of 'Romeo and Juliet'. 'Romeo and Juliet' was no light undertaking, and it is perhaps worth recording that, out of twenty characters, more or less, in the play, not one of them had ever been attempted by any of us before; so that to each actor in the cast it was a first night's representation. This, in a Shakespeare play, is somewhat remarkable, and difficult beyond belief to all who know the difficulties under which actors labour on their first appearances in what are called legitimate parts. Every part has been acted before—and various standards of opinions have been formed and volumes probably written upon them. It is a common thing to hear an actor say, 'Ah, give me an original part,' meaning a part that cannot be judged by precedent. It was thought by some, I remember, that I had overdone our play with scenery and trappings, and that I had spent too much upon its production. That I don't dispute, but that it was overdone—I do. Nothing, to my mind, can be overdone upon the stage that is beautiful—I mean correct and harmonious, and that heightens, not dwarfs, the imagination and reality. I took no less comparative pains in producing 'The Captain of the Watch' or the 'Two Roses'. The next play—and I must again inflict upon you the tediousness of Shakespeare—the next play which we shall have the honour of presenting will be 'Much Ado About Nothing,' the cast of which will be the best I can by every possibility command. What our next venture may be after that I can hardly now say, for, like a good skipper, I must closely watch the breeze of your desire and trim my sails accordingly.

"On behalf of the Lyceum company, I must thank you for the manifold kindness you have shown, and I must especially thank you on behalf of Mrs. Stirling, whose performance of the Nurse will, I am sure, be long remembered by you, and on behalf of Miss Ellen Terry. To play the part of Juliet one hundred and thirty consecutive times and never to have faltered is an effort calling forth an energy both of brain and soul—a feat of physical endurance not often accomplished, and seldom, I am glad to say, if ever, required of an artist. You will perhaps say, 'Then why require it?' Ladies and gentlemen, 'Those who live to please must please to live'. Success cannot be commanded in theatrical matters. If you like the presentment of a play you will come and see it; if you don't like it you will stay away, and if you do come and see it in goodly numbers, it is a manager's duty to continue it. 'While you have success keep it,' should be the motto of the manager of a big theatre, for sympathy without success will soon shut up his theatre. For myself, whilst thanking you for the brilliant attendance with which you have honoured me to-night (another proof of your favour), I have a confession to make which lies heavy upon my breast, for if I am to credit a certain authority, I have grievously offended you. It seems I have been guilty of sanctioning a custom more honoured in the breach than the observance—the custom of what is called taking a 'benefit'. Benefits, it appears, should never be taken, should be forgot, at least by actors whom your favour has cherished with prosperity and honour. Now, I beg to differ from this view, and having the respect and honour of my calling thoroughly and seriously at heart, would not forget the old custom. Ladies and gentlemen, few of you, I daresay, have come here to-night with the impression that your money will be welcome to an impoverished treasury. It is not to put money in my purse or to take it out of yours that I cling to the old custom. But I cannot deny myself at the end of each season the gratification of reading in your kindly faces that approbation which I deserve so imperfectly, but which, believe me, I value so highly. Thanks to your generous favour, every night is a benefit or otherwise to me as a manager, but on occasions like this I come forward—and I am not ashamed to do so, as many great masters of my art have done so before me—to take a special benefit, the benefit of seeing around me many of my best and well-tried friends—best and well-tried because throughout my career, through all my struggles, through my failures and successes, they have succoured me with their hearty sympathy and cheered me with their ungrudging encouragement. Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you with all my heart, and wish you but for a little time 'Good-bye,' and I hope I shall never be guilty of worse taste or greater vulgarity than in appearing before you as I do to-night; and whether it may be called a benefit or by any other name, I shall be proud of the occasion which can gather together such a distinguished assembly as have honoured me with their presence to-night."

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

Revived at the Lyceum, 11th October, 1882.

Benedick - - - -	Mr. Henry Irving.
Don Pedro - - - -	Mr. W. Terriss.
Don John - - - -	Mr. C. Glenney.
Claudio - - - -	Mr. Forbes-Robertson.
Leonato - - - -	Mr. Fernandez.
Antonio - - - -	Mr. H. Howe.
Balthazar - - - -	Mr. J. Robertson.
Borachio - - - -	Mr. F. Tyars.
Conrade - - - -	Mr. Hudson.
Friar Francis - - -	Mr. Mead.
Dogbery - - - -	Mr. S. Johnson.
Verges - - - - -	Mr. Stanislaus Calhaem.
Seacoal - - - -	Mr. Archer.
Oatcake - - - -	Mr. Harbury.
A Sexton - - - -	Mr. Carter.
A Messenger - - -	Mr. Haviland.
A Boy - - - - -	Miss K. Brown.
Hero - - - - -	Miss Millward.
Margaret - - - -	Miss Harwood.
Ursula - - - - -	Miss L. Payne.
Beatrice - - - -	Miss Ellen Terry.

Act I., Scene. Leonato's House. Act II., Scene 1. Before Leonato's House; Scene 2. Hall in Leonato's House. Act III., Scene 1. Before Leonato's House; Scene 2. Leonato's Garden—Evening; Scene 3. Leonato's Garden—Morning; Scene 4. The Cedar Walk; Scene 5. A Street. Act IV., Scene. Inside a Church. Act V., Scene 1. A Prison; Scene 2. Leonato's Garden; Scene 3. The Monument of Leonato; Scene 4. Hall in Leonato's House.

As promised in July, Irving re-opened the Lyceum on 2nd September, with "Romeo and Juliet." On that date, the tragedy was presented by him for the hundred and sixty-first, and last, time. On 11th October, he revived "Much Ado About Nothing" and entered upon a period of prosperity and popularity for which we look in vain for any approach in the history of the higher drama. In recent years, there has been a disposition to belittle, among Irving's other achievements, this particular revival, and, of course, without any foundation but the usual one of "envy, malice, and all uncharitableness". To those who are possessed of the knowledge of the true state of the case, such statements could only seem ridiculous if they were not so absolutely wicked. For the present, it will suffice to state a few facts which are beyond all controversy. Let us begin with the actual reception of the performance on the first night of the revival. The *Daily Telegraph* opened a two-column account of the revival with a reference to the audience: "There was but one remark heard last night as an audience, with pleasure written on every countenance, filed out of the handsome theatre into the wet and miserable streets. All had gone more than well—far better, indeed, that the most sanguine could have expected—to instances of individual excellence was added a high tone of general merit, and never before in the memory of the oldest playgoer, had 'Much Ado About Nothing' been so well acted or so sumptuously attired. Of course Mr. Irving came forward when all was over, with genuine satisfaction written on his face, and modestly talked of the 'shortcomings' of himself and company, at which all present set up a disapproving shout, and intimated, as was indeed the case, how excellently each performer had gone through with his allotted task. The spirit and gaiety of the acting were delightful to the ordinary spectator; the interpretation of the play, from first to last, was welcome to the most precise and exacting student." Page after page of praise for the revival—and of every phase of it—might be cited, but, for the moment, let us confine ourselves to mere fact. Let us take the opinion of Dutton Cook—the least enthusiastic of the dramatic critics of his day—as to the Benedick. He described the character, as impersonated by Irving, as "a valorous cavalier, who rejoices in brave apparel and owns a strong feeling for humour; over his witty encounters with Beatrice there presides a spirit of pleasantness; his rudest sallies are so mirthfully spoken as to be deprived of all real offensiveness; he banters like a gentleman, and not like a churl; he is a privileged railer at women, a recognised jester at marriage, but a popular person nevertheless. The stage Benedick has been apt to be something of a bully, as the stage Beatrice has been often very much of a scold. At the Lyceum it is clearly shown that the very combativeness of Benedick and Beatrice is an evidence of their mutual regard. They delight in controversy, because, unconsciously, it involves companionship. Their war of words is always 'a merry war'. The aversion with which their love commences is purely artificial; the more they traffic in satire and epigram, the closer they are brought together; their passion for ridicule is a sort of common ground upon which they meet, and in the sequel are unwilling to part." Benedick and Beatrice, in short, were presented at the Lyceum in the spirit of high comedy. Irving's chief successes were in Benedick's soliloquy in the third act, "which is very happily delivered, while in the later dialogues with Beatrice, and the scene of his challenging Claudio, the actor's success is supreme." As a production, "Much Ado About Nothing" was one of the most beautiful of all Irving's tributes to Shakespeare. Apart from its wealth of scenery and costume, it was notable for being the fourth Shakespearean play with Italian pictures for a background which he had brought out within three years. Yet, fine as were the revivals of "The Merchant of Venice," "Othello," and "Romeo and Juliet," not only did "Much Ado About Nothing" eclipse them all in the matter of decoration, but it differed in respect to the variety of scene which Irving gave to it. For he was the one man of his time who understood that money could not accomplish everything on the stage—he was lavish, when need be, but he possessed supreme taste, as well as infinite patience.

As for the Beatrice of Miss Ellen Terry, it was an impersonation of sheer brilliancy and allurement. It received, and deservedly so, the warmest admiration from all ranks of playgoers. It was, indeed, felt to be a matchless performance, radiant with good humour and instilled with grace. Then, again, the excellence of the general cast was wonderful. More than twenty-five years have passed since that first night, but the memory of it brings back pictures of harmonious acting which, in this particular play, would be impossible of attainment under modern conditions. And the artistic success of the revival was equalled by the financial result. The comedy was represented without interruption from 11th October, 1882, until 1st June, 1883, and was then withdrawn, literally in the height of its success, in consequence of arrangements—the forthcoming visit to America—which made certain revivals imperative. The profit for this first run—two hundred and twelve consecutive performances—was nearly £26,000, and this with an expenditure of ten thousand pounds more than that sum!

The revivals in question were the outcome of an arrangement which had been made a twelvemonth previously for a tour of America. Irving, who never left anything to chance, regarded these revivals not only as potent attractions—as they proved to be—but as rehearsals for his important undertaking. These farewell performances began with "The Bells," and were followed by "The Lyons Mail"—in which Miss Terry acted the small part of the outcast Jeanette—"Charles the First," "Hamlet," "The Merchant of Venice," "Eugene Aram"—reduced to one act—and "The Belle's Stratagem," and "Louis XI." On the afternoon of 14th June, it should also be mentioned, Irving resumed a familiar character, Robert Macaire, in a performance given on behalf of the Royal College of Music, which resulted in the addition of the handsome sum of a thousand pounds to the funds of that institution.

One of the most remarkable scenes in the history of the English stage took place on the closing night of the season. As usual, this was allotted to the actor-manager's "benefit". The programme was opened with the condensed version of "Eugene Aram," with Irving as the conscience-stricken murderer and Miss Terry as Ruth Meadows. A song by Mr. Herbert Reeves, Toole in his sketch, "Trying a Magistrate," "The Death of Nelson" and "Then You'll Remember Me," rendered with wonderful effect by Sims Reeves—

preceded "The Belle's Stratagem"—reduced for the occasion to two acts—with Irving as Doricourt and Miss Terry as Letitia Hardy. But the real event of the evening was the actor-manager's farewell speech. Hardly had the curtain fallen on the last act of the comedy ere the audience, animated by one feeling, gave vent to their pent-up excitement in loud shouts of "Irving, Irving!" The stage was deluged with wreaths and bouquets, in the midst of which Henry Irving presently appeared. The actor was still in his costume as Doricourt, but without the wig, looking very pale and evidently much affected by the affectionate greeting. When the cheers had subsided, he advanced to the footlights and spoke as follows: "Ladies and Gentlemen,—I have often had to say 'good-bye' to you on occasions like this, but never has the task been so difficult as it is to-night, for we are about to have a longer separation than we have ever had before. Soon an ocean will roll between us, and it will be a long time before we can hear your heart-stirring cheers again. It is some consolation, though, to think that we shall carry with us across the Atlantic the goodwill of many friends who are here to-night, as well as of many who are absent. Here—in this theatre—have we watched the growth of your great and generous sympathy with our work, which has been more than rewarded by the abundance of your regard, and you will believe me when I say I acutely feel this parting with those who have so steadily and staunchly sustained me in my career. Not for myself alone I speak, but on behalf of my comrades, and especially for Miss Ellen Terry. Her regret at parting with you is equal to mine. You will, I am sure, miss her—as she will certainly miss you. But we have our return to look forward to, and it will be a great pride to us to come back with the stamp of the favour and good-will of the American people, which, believe me, we shall not fail to obtain. The 2nd of next June will, I hope, see us home with you again. We shall have acted in America for six months, from 29th October to the 29th of the following April, during which time we shall have played in some forty cities. Before our departure we shall appear in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Liverpool, from whence we start upon our expedition. This theatre will not be closed long; for on the 1st of September a lady will appear before you whose beauty and talent have made her the favourite of America from Maine to California—Miss Mary Anderson—a lady to whom I am sure you will give the heartiest English welcome—that is a foregone conclusion. You will, I know, extend the same welcome to my friend, Lawrence Barrett, the famous American actor, who will appear here in the early part of next year. It is a delight to me, as it must have been to you, to have my friend Sims Reeves here to-night, and I hope that the echo of the words so beautifully sung by him will linger in your memories, and that you *will* remember me; and it has also been a great delight to have had my old friend, Toole, and my young friend, Herbert Reeves, here to-night. At all times it is a happy thing to be surrounded by friends, and especially on such an occasion as this. And now, ladies and gentlemen, I must say 'Good-bye'. I can but hope that in our absence some of you will miss us; and I hope that when we return you will be here, or some few of you at least, to welcome us back. From one and all to one and all, with full, and grateful, and hopeful, hearts, I wish you, lovingly and respectfully, 'Good-bye!'" Words are almost useless to describe the scene which followed. The band played "Auld Lang Syne," and the curtain was again raised disclosing the entire Lyceum company on the stage, a sight which caused the great audience to burst into an extraordinary tumult of enthusiasm. Henry Irving might well have felt that he had no more triumphs to win; for such a tribute of enthusiastic affection would fill up the measure of the most exacting ambition. The Doricourt of that evening was in strange contrast to that of 1866. In the one case, a young and experienced actor was on the threshold of his career in London; in the other, he had conquered the playgoers of his native land and he was on the eve of triumphs, such as no other English actor has secured, across the Atlantic.

If this book were a mere chronicle of facts and figures, some very remarkable statistics might be given. But we must be content with only a glance, here and there, at the extraordinary sums received by Henry Irving from the public. Thus, for instance, the season which had just closed brought in precisely £86,579 12s. 9d. Against this, there was the heavy expenditure of £53,477 7s. 1d. Even so, a profit of over £33,000 in eleven months is fairly handsome in theatrical enterprise. A sum of £700 was paid by the public in this season for books of the Lyceum version of "Romeo and Juliet" and "Much Ado About Nothing". The triumph of London was continued in the provinces, but, ere the London season closed, some social events took place which must be recorded. On Monday, 8th May, after the performance of "Much Ado About Nothing," Irving entertained the Prince of Wales at supper on the stage of the Lyceum—converted for the occasion into a handsome tent—and among the small company were three actors, Mr. S. B. Bancroft, Mr. James Fernandez, and J. L. Toole, and George Augustus Sala. On Wednesday, 4th July, a banquet was given to the actor in St. James's Hall. The chair was taken by the Lord Chief Justice of England. The company included representatives of law and art, music and the drama, science and literature, the navy and army—in short, over five hundred of the most distinguished men in London of the time united in honouring the great actor. Lord Coleridge in proposing the toast of the evening, made a long and learned speech in the course of which he reviewed Irving's work and praised him highly as a manager as well as an actor. He laid particular emphasis on Irving's influence in connection with the stage: "The general tone and atmosphere of a theatre, wherever Mr. Irving's influence is predominant, has been uniformly higher and purer. The pieces which he has acted, and the way he has acted them, have always been such that no husband need hesitate to take his wife, no mother to take her daughter, where Mr. Irving is the ruling spirit. He has, I believe, recognised that in this matter there lies upon him, as upon every one in his position, a grave responsibility. He has felt, possibly unconsciously, that the heroic signal of Lord Nelson ought not to be confined in its application simply to men of arms, but that England expects every man to do his duty when it lays upon him a duty to do, and to do it nobly (cheers). Moreover, I believe that what has brought us together to-night, besides that feeling, is the remembrance of the generosity and unselfishness of Mr. Irving's career (cheers). He has shown that generosity not only in the parts he has played, but in the parts he has not played. He has shown that he did not care to be always the central figure of a surrounding group, in which every one was to be subordinated to the centre, and in which every actor was to be considered as a foil to the leading part. He has been superior to the selfishness which now and again has interfered with the course of some of our best actors, and he has had his reward. He has collected around him a set of men who, I believe, are proud to act with him—(cheers)—men whose feeling towards him has added not a little to the brilliant success which his management has achieved ; men who feel that they act, not merely under a manager, but under a friend ; men who are proud to be his companions, and many of whom have come here to-night to show by their presence that they are so (cheers)".

In extolling the high purpose which had actuated Henry Irving—which continued to actuate him, be it said, until his death—Lord Coleridge said : "It is because we believe that those high aims have been pursued by Mr. Irving, and because we admire his character in so pursuing them, that this unexampled gathering has come here to-night," whereat there were loud and prolonged cheers. Irving replied briefly, with that perfect taste which ever distinguished him when addressing an audience. "I cannot conceive a greater honour entering into the life of any man," he said, "than the honour you have paid me by assembling here to-night. To look around this room and scan the faces of my distinguished hosts, would stir to its depths a colder nature than mine. It is not in my power, my lords and gentlemen, to thank you for the compliment you have to-night paid me. 'Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried, Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel.' Never before have I so strongly felt the magic of those words; but you will remember it is also said in the same sentence, 'Give thy thoughts no tongue'. And gladly, had it been possible, would I have obeyed that wise injunction to-night. The actor is profoundly influenced by precedent, and I cannot forget that many of my predecessors have been nerved by farewell banquets for the honour which awaited them on the other side of the Atlantic; but this occasion I regard as much more than a compliment to myself, I regard it as a tribute to the art which I am proud to serve—and I believe that feeling will be shared by the profession to which you have assembled to do honour. The time has long gone by when there was any need to apologise for the actor's calling. The world can no more exist without the drama than it can without its sister art—music. The stage gives the readiest response to the demand of human nature, to be transported out of itself into the realms of the ideal—not that all our ideals on the stage are realised—none but the artist knows how immeasurably he may fall short of his aim or his conception, but to have an ideal in art and to strive through one's life to embody it, may be a passion to the actor as it may be to the poet. Your lordship has spoken most eloquently of my career. Possessed of a generous mind and a high judicial faculty, your lordship has been to-night, I fear, more generous than judicial. But if I have in any way deserved commendation, I am proud that it was as an actor that I won it. As the director of a theatre my experience has been short, but as an actor I have been before the London public for seventeen years; and on one thing I am sure you will all agree—that no actor or manager has ever received from that public more generous, ungrudging encouragement and support. . . . The climax of the favour extended to me by my countrymen has been reached to-night. You have set upon me a burden of responsibility—a burden which I gladly and proudly bear. The memory of to-night will be to me a sacred thing—a memory which will, throughout my life, be ever treasured—a memory which will stimulate me to further endeavour, and encourage me to loftier aim."

Covers, it may be added, were laid for five hundred and twenty gentlemen, and four hundred ladies heard the speeches from the galleries of the hall. Long accounts appeared in the American newspapers—the United States Ambassador, the Hon. J. Russell Lowell, made one of the chief speeches of the evening. This public testimonial was followed by a supper of honour at the Garrick Club given by Mr. Bancroft and attended by over eighty representatives of the stage—the greater number of those present being prominent English and American actors. There is no occasion to print the glowing eulogy of the host or the full reply made by the guest of the evening. It is curious, however, to recall Irving's remarks on the subject of titles for actors. It was an open secret that he had been offered—and had declined—a knighthood. "Titles for painters," he said, "if you like—they paint at home; for writers—they write at home; for musicians—they compose at home. But the actor acts in the sight of the audience—he wants a fair field and no favour—he acts among his colleagues, without whom he is powerless; and to give him any distinction in the play-bill which others would not enjoy would be prejudicial to his success, and fatal, I believe, to his popularity." The American actor, Lawrence Barrett, who was present on this interesting occasion, paid an eloquent tribute to Irving, and prophesied for him "a grand welcome in America, where every actor, great and small, is proud of him. At his landing he will be greeted with warm clasps of the hands, and every actor will feel that a part of his glory is shared with the brothers of his craft—that each will share in his triumph and take a leaf from his chaplet of laurel."

The six weeks before Irving sailed for America were days and nights of hard work. Not only were there constant changes of programme[1] during the fortnight in each of the big towns which he visited—Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Liverpool—but farewell banquets were the order of the day and night. The Glasgow Pen and Pencil Club entertained him on 6th September. In Edinburgh, he had a most arduous, yet a joyous, time. On Monday, 10th September, he opened the new theatre called, in compliment to him, the Lyceum, with a representation of "Much Ado About Nothing". On the 20th of that month, a supper was given to him, in the Freemasons' Hall, by the Edinburgh Pen and Pencil Club. About one hundred and seventy gentlemen, connected with literature and art, were presided over by Dr. Pryde, LL.D. —the Principal of the Edinburgh Ladies' College, who observed with truth that Irving's tour was a triumphal procession. In replying to the toast of his health and prosperity, Irving once more insisted on the dignity of the stage. "I look upon this gathering to-night," he began, "as a recognition that you acknowledge the stage as an institution of intellectual

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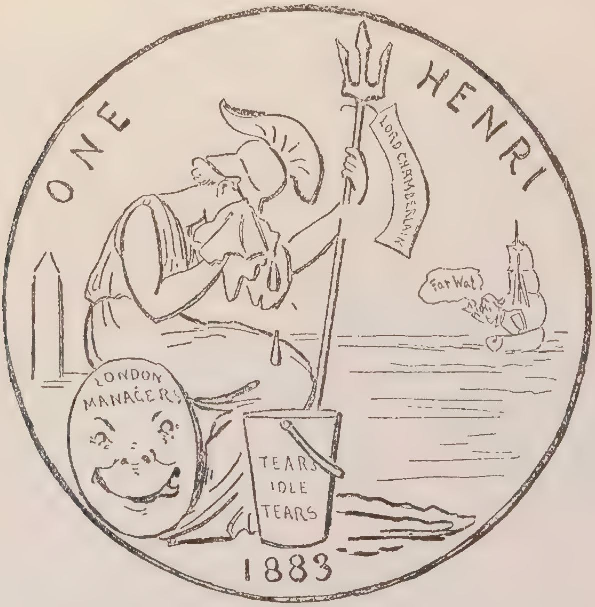
[1] "Hamlet," "The Merchant of Venice," "Charles the First," "Eugene Aram," "The Belle's Stratagem," "The Cup," "The Bells," "Louis XI." and "Othello" (with J. B. Howard as the Moor) were represented.

"WESTWARD HO!"

DESIGN FROM THE MENU CARD OF THE "SPECIAL MEETING IN COMPLIMENT TO MR. HENRY IRVING" OF THE EDINBURGH PEN AND PENCIL CLUB, THURSDAY, 20TH SEPTEMBER, 1883.

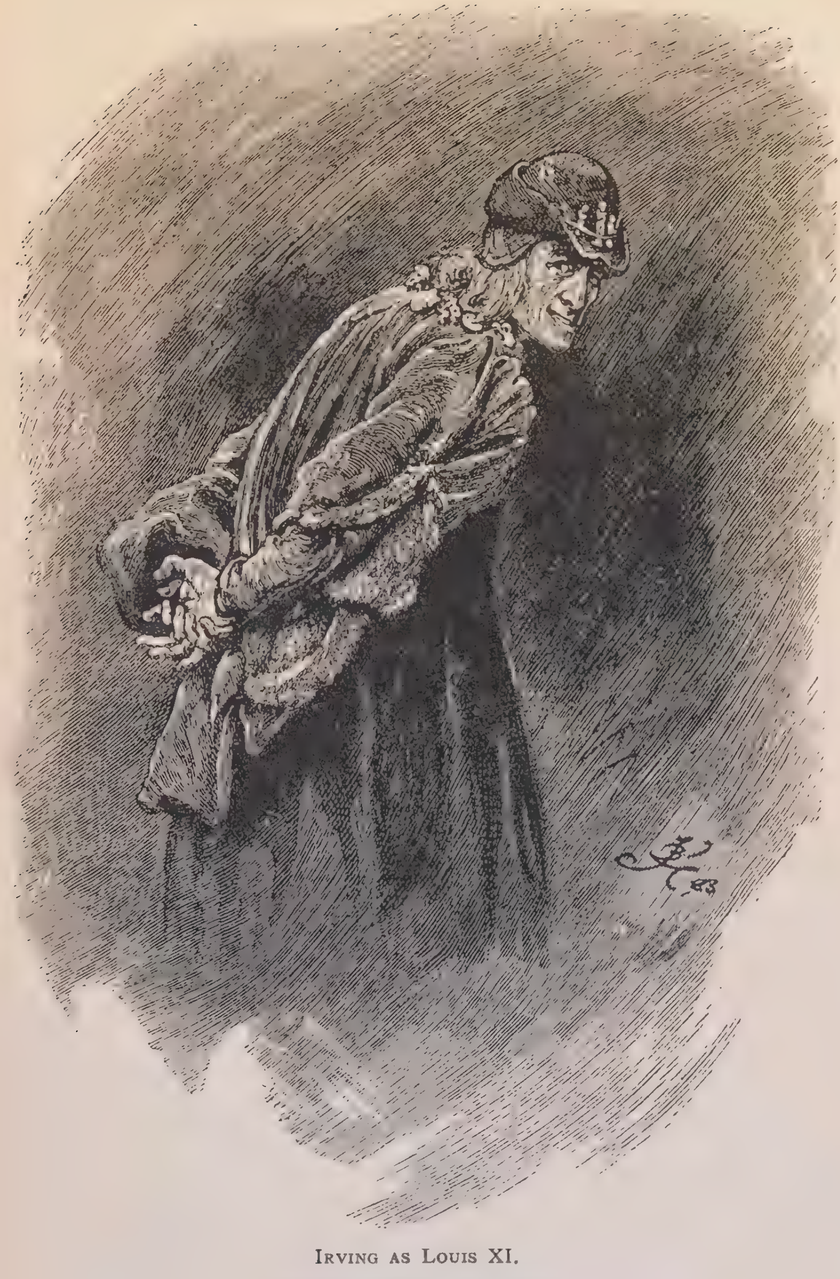
delight—a place of recreation for intelligent people. I am proud of being an actor—and I am proud of my art." He then defended himself for the position which he had taken in regard to the interpretation of Shakespeare. "As I would be natural in the representation of character, so I would be truthful in the mounting of plays. My object in this is to do all in my power to heighten, and not distract, the imagination—to produce a play in harmony with the poet's ideas, and to give all the picturesque effect that the poet's text will justify." He concluded with a charming allusion to his early days in Edinburgh some twenty-four years earlier. "I have told you so often—and you must be tired of hearing it—that Edinburgh was my *alma mater;* and when I think of my dreams here, some of which have not been wholly unrealised, and when I recall the friendships I formed here, some of which have never faltered, and of the friends I have lost only through the too swift embrace of the fell serpent, death—you will know how dear to me is your noble city."

His memory, indeed, was crowded with those early recollections when he was on the eve of quitting his native land. On Saturday, 6th October, he gave his last performance of this triumphant season at the Alexandra Theatre, Liverpool, in the character of Louis XI., and, on the 11th, sailed from that port on board the White Star steamer, *Britannic.* In the interim between the close of his Liverpool engagement and his sailing for America he paid a flying visit to London. Returning to the north, he renewed his friendly intercourse with Mr. Gladstone at a luncheon party given by the Earl of Derby at Knowsley. On the morning of his departure for the United States, he gave a breakfast to the directors of the Royal General Theatrical Fund, who paid a special visit to Liverpool in order to wish "God speed" to Irving, who, with Mr. Alfred de Rothschild and J. L. Toole, was a trustee of the Fund. This volume may well close with his speech on the last night of his engagement in Liverpool. He was ever grateful to Liverpool play-goers and to Liverpool writers. And he never failed to express his remembrance and his regard. "It is my privilege," he said on this occasion, "to thank the Liverpool public for the sympathy and goodwill which they have lavished upon us, and which have been the climax of the favour we have received during our present short tour. I am afraid all that you could do to spoil us you have done; but I hope that we have worked none the less earnestly on that account, and I hope that when our American cousins discover our many failings they will lay but little blame on the good nature of the British public.



Britannia Mourning the Loss of Henry Irving.

From Liverpool we start on our expedition, and when from America we return, at Liverpool we land again. But it is not simply as a starting and landing place that we shall remember your city. I have many memories of Liverpool. One of them is of a time, eighteen years ago, when I stood upon the stage of the Prince of Wales's Theatre without an engagement, and wondered what on earth I should do next. Fortunately, I have been able to do something; but I shall never forget that the Liverpool Press gave me the warmest encouragement



Irving as Louis XI.

From the drawing by Fred. Barnard.

at a time that was a critical part of my career. I have another memory which comes vividly to me as I stand upon these boards. I am thinking of my old comrade, Edward Saker, who was honoured and loved by all who knew him (loud applause). On what his skill and enterprise did for the Liverpool stage, I need not dwell. You could tell the story better than I could. But I may at least be permitted to say that the tradition of sound and able management which he established here is most worthily sustained by the lady who was for many years the partner of his public success as well as of his home life. I rejoice that she is able to so courageously follow in his wake, and that she is surrounded by a staff as loyal as it is efficient. Once more I thank you on behalf of one and all of us, and on behalf of Miss Ellen Terry, whose indebtedness to you is equal to my own. Like Sir Peter Teazle, we leave our characters behind us, but we are more confident than Sir Peter that they will be well taken care of; and so, with full hearts and big hopes, we wish you a respectful and affectionate farewell."

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